



THE BUFFALO BILL STORIES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION
DEVOTED TO BORDER HISTORY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 Witham St., N. Y.

No. 62.

Price, Five Cents.

BUFFALO BILL'S STILL HUNT

FIGHTING ^{OR} THE ROBBER OF THE RANGES



BY
THE AUTHOR
OF
'BUFFALO BILL'

ALTHOUGH THE HORSE WAS BOUNCING UP THE HILL AT FULL SPEED, HER AIM WAS TRUE AND THE ANIMAL DROPPED UPON HIS KNEES, THROWING HIS RIDER HARD.



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BUFFALO BILL'S STILL HUNT;

OR,

Fighting the Robber of the Ranges.

By the author of "BUFFALO BILL."

CHAPTER I.

THE ROBBER OF THE RANGES.

The coach on a branch of the Overland Stage Trail, with its terminus at Pioneer Post, was upon its way to its destination, with an extra hand known as Ribbons upon the box, Horseshoe Ned, the regular driver, being laid up for a short while.

It had reached a part of the trail where there was a steep and rugged descent to the bed of a swiftly-flowing stream known as Deep Dell 'Brook, and Ribbons had brought the team of six horses to a halt for a short rest and a cooling draught of water.

There was a steep ascent upon the other side of the brook, with rocky cliffs some thirty feet in height, upon either side, for a few hundred yards.

Ribbons, the driver, was a good hand with the reins, a bold fellow and one who did not shrink from driving the Overland trails, no matter what the danger might be.

He was seated upon his box with the air of one who felt that a few hours more would give him rest, when suddenly a man rode down into the trail ahead of him, and two faces peered over the rocky cliff, their eyes glancing along the barrels of their rifles.

"Hands up, Ribbons, or take the consequences," said

the horseman, riding toward the stage, and at the same time the men on the cliff covered the driver with their rifles.

"Pilgrims, we is in fer it!" cried Ribbons, turning to the window of the coach, and a voice quickly answered:

"Road agents, eh?"

"Well, I fight!"

With this the speaker leveled his revolver at one of the men on the cliff, and pulled trigger.

The man leaped to his feet, and tottering, fell into the road below, while his companion on the other cliff fired a shot into the coach.

At the same moment the horseman shouted:

"Ha! that is your game, is it, Ribbons?"

With his words he pulled trigger, and the driver sank back dead on his seat.

"Ho, men, head off this coach and I'll see who this gamecock is who dares fire upon Silk Lasso Sam and his band," and the horseman spurred toward the coach, when several shots rang out of the window, one of which dropped his horse, and another wounded him in the shoulder.

The highwayman returned the fire, just as a mounted man came rapidly to his aid, and riddled the coach with

bullets, though the plucky defender inside fired again, this time wounding the horse ridden by the outlaw coming to the aid of his chief.

The animal fell heavily, but the rider caught upon his feet and sprang to one side of the coach, while his chief threw the door open upon the other.

"It's over with him, so we have nothing to fear now," said the chief, as he saw the form of the defender of the coach lying all in a heap, and his life ebbing rapidly away, from the wounds he had received at the hands of the outlaws.

"Frank dead, one horse ditto, and another dying, so the old coach should pan out well to repay us, Pat," said the chief, and he added:

"Not to speak of my own wound, which amounts to little."

He drew the body of the brave passenger from the coach as he spoke, and with deft hands, as though long experienced in such work, went through his search for booty.

A well-filled purse, some jewelry, a watch and chain, and a wallet of papers were what he found, and quickly the outlaw chief looked them over.

Then he stood for some time, lost in a deep reverie, as though with little fear of danger to himself there, until suddenly he broke out with the words:

"By Heavens, but I'll risk it!

"Yes, if I hang for it, I will."

"Do what, sir?" asked his companion.

"Pat, I am going to play a bold game for gold, for I shall go to the fort, and you are to help me out."

"Go to the fort, sir?" asked the amazed man.

"Yes, I shall go as a passenger in Ribbon's coach, one who fired upon the road agents and was wounded, and afterward was robbed.

"Quick, get me the clothes off that man and help me to disguise myself—yes, here is a dressing-case belonging to him, and I will soon have off my beard and mustache.

"Then I will place the body of the passenger in the coach in another of his suits of clothes, for he traveled well supplied, and Frank can be left where he fell, for they will send back to the scene of the hold-up when I reach the fort."

"Ah, captain, you have clean lost your senses."

"Not a bit of it, Pat, for I see a chance to visit the fort without the slightest damage, and there is one there whom I wish particularly to see, for it means big money for me."

And all this while the daring man was making his toilet, having quickly shaved off his mustache and imperial.

"Now, Pat, stand there and empty a couple of revolvers into the coach, and then you get Frank's horse, take that dead man's luggage, and go to the retreat, but say nothing of where I am, or when to expect me back, only do you keep in Spy's Cañon to be ready to meet me, or a messenger I may send there.

"Now I am ready, and do you get off at once, for a body of cavalry might happen along this way."

And mounting the box, where the dead Ribbons still lay, after a few more words of instructions to his man, the outlaw chief drove on up the hill, holding the reins like one who was a skilled driver.

His outlaw companion followed a moment after, with

the luggage of the dead passenger, leaving his dead comrade and the horses lying in the trail.

Half-an-hour after the coach had rolled away a horseman came dashing upon the scene and drew rein.

The horseman was Buffalo Bill, the King of Scouts, and he cried, sternly:

"This is the work of the Robber of the Ranges—Silk Lasso Sam."

The trails were still fresh, and that night Buffalo Bill led a band of scouts upon the outlaws and caught them. They offered a desperate resistance, and all preferred to die rather than surrender. One outlaw made his escape. To the surprise of all, however, Silk Lasso Sam's body was not found among the others, and only Bill himself had any idea of what the outlaw's scheme was.

CHAPTER II.

AT PIONEER POST.

"Sieze that man!" The speaker was Buffalo Bill, and he was pointing to a well-dressed man who was talking to Colonel Dunwoody in his private room in the fort which he commanded at Pioneer Post.

The two scouts who were behind Buffalo Bill sprang forward, and to the surprise of Colonel Dunwoody, bound him and threw him upon the floor.

Buffalo Bill soon explained the situation.

"I recognize that man as the Robber of the Ranges, although his mustache and imperial have been shaved off," he cried, after he had told Colonel Dunwoody of the hold-up of the coach and the death of the driver and passenger.

"It is clear to me that he has come here to impersonate the passenger, in order to start some new plan of mischief."

Colonel Dunwoody seemed disposed to think that the great scout had made a mistake, but when two of the drivers on the stage line who were called in had positively identified the prisoner as the Robber of the Ranges—Silk Lasso Sam—his doubts were removed and the prisoner, who had not spoken a word during the discussion, was quietly removed to the guardhouse.

Two days after the capture of the outlaw, a new arrival appeared at Pioneer Post.

It was a woman, and this fact was sufficient to create considerable stir at the post, where women were, indeed, scarce.

She came from Pocket City, the neighboring mining town, where she had been known to the miners as Bonnie Belle, although those who knew her well declared that her name was Ruth Arden, and that she had come from the East in search of a brother who had gone West.

She was the owner of the only hotel in the place—the Frying Pan, as it was called—as well as the gambling house known as Devil's Den. She was respected by every one, as she was a woman of intelligence and refinement. Colonel Dunwoody received her kindly, and was very much surprised when he learned that Sam Arden, or Silk Lasso Sam, the robber who had been captured, was her brother, whom she had been unable to locate for years.

She wept bitterly when told that the outlaw must die for his crimes, and asked only the privilege of seeing him once. She had a long interview with him, and then announced her intention of leaving the West forever. She had nothing more to keep her there, now that the brother

she had been searching for was to die, and so she intended going back to the East.

She remained at the post for several days, but she decided to leave before her brother was executed, as she could not bear the thought of his death.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER HOLD-UP.

It was with the deepest regret that every one at the fort bade farewell to Ruth Arden—the colonel handing the maiden to a seat upon the box by the side of Horseshoe Ned, the driver, who seemed proud to have his fair passenger again under his charge.

Then Ned gathered up his reins, called to his leaders, and away whirled the coach at a slapping pace, while the eyes of Ruth were seen to turn with a longing look toward the cabin where her brother was in irons, and must soon go forth from his prison to the gallows.

The coming of Ruth had created much comment.

Had she been an ordinary person it would have been less thought of.

But all who saw her recognized the lady at once, and more, she was very beautiful, and her manner strangely fascinating.

Her coming carried out the old saying that no man is so vile but has one good woman to love him.

She had shown her good sense in going.

As the coach rolled away Surgeon Frank Powell and Buffalo Bill were standing near the latter's quarters.

"Bill, she is really going," said the surgeon, as he saw Ruth, whom both had talked to, upon the box with Horseshoe Ned.

"So it seems, Doc."

The coach rolled by just then and both Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill raised their hats, a salutation which Ruth returned with a very gracious bow.

They watched the coach until it left the stockade through the gateway.

"They is two dandies from 'wayback, miss."

Such had been Horseshoe Ned's comment regarding Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill as the coach rolled by them.

"Who are they?" innocently asked Ruth.

She had talked to both of them about her brother; but she had been too disturbed to notice who they were.

"Ther one in fatigue uniform is Dr. Frank Powell, miss, better known as ther Surgeon Scout, for he's one of the best Injun fighters and trailers on ther plains, and no man has had a more dangerous life than he has lived.

"He's a dead shot, and don't know no more what fear is than I does about preachin' ther Gospil.

"Ther' ain't no squarer and better man in the Wild West than White Beaver, as the Injuns calls him, nor a better surgeon, scout and all around man either."

"You certainly give him a most delightful recommendation, Horseshoe Ned; but, who is the one in buckskin and the broad sombrero who was talking to him?"

"That are Buffalo Bill."

"Yes, I have heard of him, as I have also of the Surgeon Scout, for they are known everywhere, it seems, through their deeds."

"Yes, miss, they is, for a fact.

"Buffalo Bill is chief of scouts at the fort, and he is a man to tie to when one needs a friend.

"It war them two, if you'll pardon me for saying it, thet captured Silk Ribbon Sam, and stopped highway robbery on this trail."

"Then you think there will now be no more holding up of coaches on the Overland?"

"Not on ther trail I runs, miss, I'm thinking."

So on the coach went along its way, Horseshoe Ned delighted at exhibiting his skill as a driver and striving hard to keep Ruth from dwelling upon the fact that she had lost her brother forever.

Just as the coach drove down into Deep Dell Brook, where it had been last held up and Ribbons had been killed, Horseshoe Ned said:

"I tells yer, miss, it's a comfort ter feel yer kin halt in thet stream ter water your horses and not be expecting a shot all ther time."

"Yes, for you have risked dangers enough to enjoy some sense of security now," was Ruth's answer.

But hardly had the words been uttered when suddenly down the trail beyond, leading into the stream, rode a horseman.

He was dressed in black, but rode a snow-white horse, though all of his trappings were of sable hue.

The horseman was masked, and wore a black sombrero, but his hair fell in heavy waves upon his broad shoulders, concealing even his neck, while, as he wore gantlet gloves, no one could have told from his appearance whether he was paleface, Indian, Chineese or negro.

"Hands up! Horseshoe Ned, for you carry a rich prize," cried the horseman as he reached the water's edge and leveled his rifle at the driver.

"Waal, I'll be eternally roasted, ef thet don't beat all, for I were jist sayin' ther trail were clear o' varmints like you."

"Silence!"

"Hold on there, my pretty lady, for I'll send a bullet through your brain as quickly as I would shoot Horseshoe Ned if you attempt to show your claws," sternly cried the highwayman.

This command was caused by seeing the action of Ruth, for she had drawn toward her a small valise she had behind her upon the top of the coach, and in which she had a revolver, which had before rendered her good service.

Not expecting a hold-up, she had not kept the weapon near her.

There was something in the tone of the man that indicated his intention to be as good as his word, and Ruth raised her hand from the satchel.

"Say, robber, if yer don't consider me rude, I'd like ter ask yer who yer be, for I thought ther old gang had been wiped out."

"The old gang was, but I have come to hunt the trails, and I am here to stay.

"That lady is well fixed, as I happen to know, so I will trouble her for her money, and all else of value she may have with her.

"If she refuses, I will kill you, Horseshoe Ned, and hold her a captive until she pays far more than I can now rob her of.

"I hope you both understand the situation."

"I understand you is a thief I'd like ter get a rope onto once," growled the driver, while Ruth said:

"Yes, I understand the situation perfectly, Sir Robber. You have the power to rob me, and so I submit to your brute force only.

"I have with me considerable money, a thousand dollars, perhaps, and some jewelry, as you have said, and I will give all up if you demand it, but I would like to ask to keep a little money and several trinkets which, of little value to you, are most valuable to me from association.

"May I keep these and a hundred dollars in money?"

It would seem that few could resist this appeal, but the robber had the power and he meant to use it.

"No, not a dollar, or anything of value shall you keep.

"I risk my life to rob, and I demand all, so give it up, or I draw trigger on Horseshoe Ned and you are my captive.

"Come, no nonsense, so hand over your wealth," and the robber rode nearer to the coach.

CHAPTER IV.

CRACK SHOTS.

The man who had halted the coach moved nearer to it, riding into the stream to do so.

The team of horses looked at him askance, as though appreciating the situation, while the face of Horseshoe Ned grew black with rage.

"Ter think I can't protect her," he muttered.

To have his fair passenger robbed of her money and jewels while in his keeping was a terrible thought to the driver.

Yet he was powerless to protect her, as the slightest resistance on his part meant instant death to him.

So the road agent, still covering the driver with his rifle, rode nearer to the coach.

"You will force me to give up all?" said Ruth, in a voice that showed she was deeply moved.

"Every dollar and valuable you has along," was the stern rejoinder.

"Then I suppose there is no help for me," and she opened the satchel and placed her hand within it.

"None, my pretty miss, for I need all you have and more too."

"Then take all that I have to give!"

As the words were uttered the hand came quickly out of the satchel, it was thrust forward, and a sharp report followed.

With a cry of pain the road agent dropped his rifle into the stream, for his right arm was shattered, and then, with a savage oath, he dropped his left hand upon his revolver on his hip.

But quickly a second shot rang out, and, unmindful of the plunging team, which brought all of Horseshoe Ned's energies to bear to stop them from turning short around in the stream, the bullet was truly aimed and the left arm dropped to his side, the weapon falling into the water.

"My God, miss, don't kill me!" cried the road agent, and he wheeled his horse by a movement of his body and a word, to dash away.

"I hate to harm that beautiful animal, but he must not escape," cried Ruth, now thoroughly aroused, and for the third time her revolver was raised.

A quick glance along the barrel and the third shot rang out.

Although the horse was bounding up the hill at full

speed, the aim was true, and the animal dropped upon his knees, stumbled and went down, throwing his rider hard.

"I'll catch him, miss, if you can hold the team," cried Horseshoe Ned, after giving vent to a wild yell of admiration for the girl's crack shooting and the success she had met with.

But as he spoke there came a rushing sound behind them, a plunge and a horseman was crossing the stream with mighty leaps.

"Buffalo Bill!" yelled Horseshoe Ned wildly, and in an instant the scout had crossed the stream and was by the side of the wounded outlaw.

"Don't kill me, for I cannot resist," said the road agent, faintly.

Snatching the mask from his face, Buffalo Bill said:

"Ah, I know that face.

"You are the one of Silk Lasso Sam's band who escaped.

"Ho, Ned, you did some crack shooting here, even if you did not kill him."

"It wasn't me did it, Buffalo Bill," responded Ned, who had now driven up to the spot.

"Not you?"

"Nary."

"Who, then?"

"This young leddy, and she knows how ter use a gun, says I."

"I did not wish to kill him, so broke his right arm.

"Then, as he drew a revolver with his left, I sent a bullet through that, and my third shot was to bring down his horse to prevent his escape."

"Well, miss, you are a crack shot, and the fellow is the last one of Silk Lasso Sam's band, so that now there will be a clear trail to travel, I guess."

"I will have you take him on with you, Horseshoe Ned, and bring him back to the fort with you on your next run."

"I'll die if I am not cared for," groaned the man.

"Well, if I was in your place, pard, I'd want to die, as yer'll hang as sartin as I knows yer name," put in Horseshoe Ned.

"I did no harm," whined the man.

"Oh, no, yer didn't, but it wasn't your fault all ther same, for yer intended ter rob this young lady, and threatened to shoot her, too."

"Well, Ned, I'll do the best I can for his wounds until you reach the station, where the doctor can care for him, and you must be particular that he does not escape."

"Yer won't go along then, Bill?"

"No, for I am on a little scouting expedition I cannot neglect.

"I heard your shots, Miss Arden, so rode on to see what was the matter.

"I congratulate you upon your nerve and splendid shooting."

"I thank you, sir, for praise from such a man as Buffalo Bill is worth having."

"It was just splendid the way she did it, Bill," said Horseshoe Ned, who now, with the scout, set to work to dress the wounds of the road agent.

Taking from her satchel several handkerchiefs, Ruth tore them into strips for bandages, and aided in dressing the wounds which she had made.

At last the work was done, the road agent was placed

in the coach and the doors secured firmly, and his traps were placed on the top.

Mounting the box again with Horseshoe Ned, Ruth said good-bye to Buffalo Bill, and the team moved on once more.

But after waiting for some little time, Buffalo Bill mounted and rode on after the coach.

CHAPTER V.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

Buffalo Bill followed on the trail of the coach, with no desire to be seen again by the woman whom he was watching.

He had not intended to be seen, only the firing had quickly taken him to the rescue.

"If she was really the ally of her brother, it is certain that the outlaw she wounded did not know it, for no look passed between them that I could see, and she would not have fired on him had she known him."

Thus mused the scout as he rode on after the coach.

It was night when he reached the station where Horseshoe Ned's run ended, and he went at once to the hotel.

He found Ned there, and learned that his passenger had taken the outgoing coach eastward.

"That settles it," mused the scout.

"She goes East and not to Pocket City, for she has given up the idea of rescue as impossible."

"Poor girl, I pity her, and only wish she loved one in some way worthy of her deep regard."

Then he said:

"Well, Ned, what do you think of Miss Arden?"

"I think she is just the dandiest girl I ever crossed ther trail of, Bill. But, Bill, ef yer hed seen Miss Arden work up ther leetle racket to a climax yer'd hev died o' joy."

"Yer see, I give up all for gone, when she talked ther same way and invited ther sarpint ter take ther things. She opened ther satchel and out come a gun, and oh, my! Bill, she's ther deadeast shot I ever seen, barrin' you and Surgeon Powell."

"She has nerve of an uncommon order, Ned, and she sends a bullet to dead center."

"But where is your prisoner?"

"He's in ther tavern under guard, the doctor havin' fixed up his wounds."

"Are they very bad?"

"Ther leetle bone in his right arm were smashed, and ther bullet grazed the one in his left, but he'll be well enough to hang, for it's his neck we wants in prime condition for ther occasion."

"But whar is you goin', Bill?"

"I thought I would ride on here and see if you needed any aid going back with your man."

"No, indeed, for I'll tie him on the box with me; but I'll be glad of your company, Bill, if you will go along."

"Thank you, no, for I'll continue on in my scouting along the range to-morrow."

Staying that night at the tavern, Buffalo Bill left bright and early the next morning, taking the trail for Yellow Dust Valley, in which was situated the mining town of Pocket City.

He was well-mounted, and it was not yet sunset when he rode by the lonely cabin of the miner, Deadshot Dean,

an honest man and a great friend of the scout, who had recently left the mines to take a trip East.

The cabin was closed and doubly locked, and an air of desolation and desertion was upon all.

The scout had hitched his horse down in the valley and walked up to the cabin.

Going to the rear of it, around the cliff, he stood gazing at the fine view from that point, until suddenly he heard blows toward the cabin.

Quickly he made his way there, and felt sure that some one was striving to break in.

Voices reached his ear, too, for one said:

"Yer hain't moved her, Jerry, so let me get a whack at her, as I fer one don't intend ter be caught in this neighborhood arter dark, fer this is too near ther Hangman's Gulch ter suit me."

Hangman's Gulch was a spot much dreaded by miners, because it was said to be haunted.

"And it don't please me a little bit."

"Take ther ax and let fly, for thar's money inside I is dead sartin," was the reply.

The scout placed his foot on the projecting ends of the logs, and quickly ascended to the roof, which was nearly flat and of boards on top of logs, slanting toward the cliff under which the cabin stood.

He drew a revolver in each hand, knelt down, and, peeping over, saw the two men hard at work to break in the door.

So far they had made no impression upon either the locks or the door, and, covering both of them with a revolver, Buffalo Bill said, sternly:

"Hands up, pards, for I want you both!"

The voice coming from over their heads, and just after their expressed dread of being so near Hangman's Gulch when night came on, brought from the lips of each man a cry of fright.

They shrank back, looked up and saw their danger.

"Hands up, I say!" roared Buffalo Bill.

Quickly they obeyed, and in an instant the scout had leaped down from the roof and confronted them.

"Breaking into Deadshot Dean's home, are you?"

"Well, I am glad I happened along at this time, for the miner is a friend of mine, and I guess you are citizens who will not be missed if you are called suddenly away from Pocket City."

"I'll take your weapons, sir," and the scout slipped the revolver and knife from the belt of one of the men.

"And yours, too," and the second one was disarmed.

"Hain't you Buffalo Bill?"

"So I am called."

"Waal, I might have knowed it, fer yer is allus around when yer hain't wanted."

"I'm a scout, you know," was the smiling answer.

"Waal, what does yer treat us this way fer?"

"When I get you to Pocket City it is more than likely you'll find out," was the scout's significant reply.

The two housebreakers did not relish the reply of Buffalo Bill.

They felt that they were in dangerous hands, and had been caught in an act that would not be tolerated in Gold Dust Valley.

It would never do to be taken into Pocket City as prisoners.

Their reputations there were of a very unsavory character, and miners were quick to resent an injustice.

They must get away at all costs, for an enraged border crowd was hard to manage, and would only argue the matter over after they were hanged.

"I say, Buffalo Bill, this is a darned good joke," said one of the prisoners.

"What is?"

"Your making us prisoners."

"Yes, it is funny."

"I doesn't see ther joke," growled the other.

"You haven't the sense of humor that your companion has, for he sees it," said the scout.

"But I means this, Pard Buffalo Bill: We was sent here by Deadshot Dean ter git some things fer him, and as he hed lost his key he told us ter knock in ther door, don't yer see?"

"I see where you did the knocking, yes."

"Now jist go with us ter Deadshot Dean, and he'll say it's all right."

"Where is he?"

"Up yer cañon thar."

"We'll show yer."

"Look here! Deadshot Dean went East weeks ago, and you cannot play any bluff game on me."

"I tells yer ther truth."

"You couldn't tell the truth, either one of you, except by accident. No, I am going to Pocket City, and you go with me. I caught you breaking into the cabin of an absent miner, and I shall so report to the miners and give you up to them."

"They'll hang us."

"That is your misfortune, not my fault."

"And we so inncerent," whined one.

"See here, Buffalo Bill, we don't want ter hand in our chips no more than you does, so if yer plays quits with us we'll divvy."

"What will you divide?"

"I've got nigh a thousand in money here with me, and Jerry have got about half as much, so you kin hev all if yer'll let us go."

"Yes, all of fifteen hundred dollars," said Jerry.

"Well, it is more money than I make in a year with chief of scouts' pay, but if it was ten times as much, you could not bribe me to do a mean act."

"I know you are two scamps, for whom hanging would be only justice, and, as I caught you housebreaking, I'll so report your acts."

"Come, you go with me."

"Stand close up behind this man, sir."

"Tom, we is goners."

"Dead sartin, Jerry."

Having placed the men at close step, Buffalo Bill buckled their belts together, and fastened them about their waists.

"I'll carry ther weepens, Buffalo Bill."

"No, thank you, Jerry, I can do so," was the smiling reply.

Shouldering the ax and iron bar the two men had brought with them, and sticking their weapons in his belt, until he looked like a walking arsenal, Buffalo Bill made his prisoners march down the hill before him.

There he found his horse, and, mounting, ordered the men to face toward Pocket City and march.

They did so, with low curses and whines.

It was just before sunset as they passed Hangman's Gulch, and they glanced up into the dark recesses of the cañon with many misgivings that they would soon be more intimately acquainted with the weird and dreaded spot.

Just as twilight was falling, the scout heard the supper-horn of the Frying Pan Hotel, the only hotel in the town, and from that moment a stream of humanity began to pour out of the mines and cabins and flow toward the rendezvous of the miners on every night.

They quickly caught sight of Buffalo Bill, whose handsome face and form were seldom seen in Yellow Dust Valley, and, beholding his prisoners, they began to call out in many an odd question as to what it meant.

"Ho, Tom and Jerry, what's up?"

"Hain't thet Buf-ler Bill?"

"What has yer got 'em in limbo fer, pard?"

"Has they been robbin' a henroost?"

"Say, pard, what has they been up ter?"

"Is yer goin' ter hang 'em?"

"They'll be no loss."

"How did yer git yer foot inter it, Tom and Jerry?"

Such questions flowed too fast for replies, and though the scout remained silent, the two prisoners tried to explain, but were constantly cut off by fresh questions.

At last a commanding voice said:

"Ho, scout, what have those fellows been doing?"

The speaker was a storekeeper in the camps, and a man of considerable prominence, being captain of the Vigilantes.

He stood in front of the Frying Pan, where he had gone to get his supper.

"I was coming along the valley, sir, near Deadshot Dean's cabin, and went up to take a look at it, when I saw those two men trying to break in the door."

"Here are the ax and bar they used."

"I climbed up on the roof and had them where I wanted them, so made them prisoners, determined to bring them to Pocket City and turn them over to the miners, with a statement of the facts."

"They have a very bad record, sir, and have got their heads at last into the noose."

"Remember, Tom and Jerry, it has not been a week since I warned you that you were getting to the end of your rope."

"You, sir, I am told, are Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts at Pioneer Post?"

"I am, sir."

"Then turn over your prisoners to me for trial by our miners' laws, sir, for I am Scott Kindon, captain of Vigilantes and proprietor of the Miners' Market, as my store is called. I am glad to meet you, Buffalo Bill, so dismount and be my guest at the hotel to-night."

CHAPTER VI.

"ACCORDING TO LAW AND GOSPEL."

Invited as he was by the Vigilante captain, to become his guest at the Frying Pan, Buffalo Bill could not decline, so he dismounted and led his horse to the stables.

He was shown to a pleasant room, where he freshened up for supper, and found every attention bestowed upon him by the clerk whom Bonnie Belle had left to manage

her affairs in her absence, and who seemed anxious to treat the scout well.

Bonnie Belle's quarters were all securely locked up in her absence, but otherwise the hotel was in full blast, and the Vigilante captain and Buffalo Bill sat down to a very tempting supper.

The prisoners had been placed in safe hands, and with their guards were eating supper near, so the scout had an opportunity to see how much kindness was bestowed upon the two men.

"You see the boys wish to do the best they can for them, as they regard them as dying men," explained the storekeeper.

"Dying men?"

"Well, it amounts to that, as we shall try them after supper, and that means a verdict of guilty."

"What is the use of trying them if the verdict is assured?" asked Buffalo Bill with a smile.

"Well, for effect.

"You caught them trying to break into Deadshot Dean's cabin and rob it, and you brought here with you the implements they used, while you bear testimony to their guilt."

"True, but why not run them out of the camps, under penalty of death if they return?"

"That would never do, for of course every fellow that is run out has a purse made up for him by the sympathetic miners, and hereafter every man that wanted money would do some act to be sent away for, whereas if we try these men, find them guilty and hang them, Pocket City will rid itself of two notorious scoundrels and their end will serve as a wholesome lesson for others."

"Well, if they are all you say they are they deserve hanging, yet I suppose it would have been better for me to have taken them to the fort to get justice."

"They will get justice here, for we will try them by the law of right.

"Now let us go and arrange for the trial."

"Need I appear in the matter, sir?"

"Well, as I am judge, I'll ask you to take a seat with me on the bench."

"You are very kind, sir; but I am only a witness."

"Well, you will have to face the prisoner and the crowd, so take a seat with me on the 'bench.'"

The "judge" evidently felt the importance of his position, and as he left the supper-room, lighted his pipe and took up his position upon the piazza, where seats had already been placed for him and the prisoners.

The bench was one in reality, and Buffalo Bill sat down next to the judge, while the prisoners were placed in front of them.

The crowd had now increased to several hundred men, yet they were not noisy, and their silence was more expressive than their shouting would have been.

The prisoners were white with fear, for they sat where the light of a number of lanterns fell full upon them.

They cast uneasy glances at the judge, baleful ones at Buffalo Bill, and pleading ones over the crowd, where they looked in vain for some sympathetic face.

The Vigilante captain called the meeting to order by rapping with his bowie knife upon the bench.

It was as effective, however, as a golden gavel in Congress would have been.

Instantly there was a deathlike silence.

"Gentlemen," began the Vigilante captain, after clearing his throat:

"You have honored me by making me captain of the Vigilantes of Yellow Dust Valley, and also have bestowed upon me the more honored title of Judge of the Criminal Court of Pocket City.

"Thus are many of us present who remember that Yellow Dust Valley was a very dangerous place of abode before the Vigilantes were organized, for lawlessness and disorder reigned supreme.

"But since they began to hunt down criminals and this court sentence them for their crimes, see the change.

"Why, there has not been a murder in Pocket City for thirty-six hours.

"This gentleman beside me, my fellow-citizens, I desire to introduce to you as a man whose name has spread from pole to pole, from the rising to the setting sun, as you will know when I tell you that he is Buffalo Bill."

A wild roar like thunder answered the words of the judge, and Buffalo Bill arose and bowed to the compliment bestowed upon him.

"Now, gentlemen," resumed the judge, "let me tell you that on his way to Pocket City this evening Buffalo Bill saw a sight which I am going to ask him to relate to you."

Thus urged, the scout arose, and simply told his story as it is known to the reader.

Then the judge resumed:

"You have heard, gentlemen, and this case is tried according to law and Gospel, for as soon as we have heard your decision in the matter, and I can guess what it will be, I will pass sentence, after which I will read a chapter in the Bible and the Ten Commandments to the prisoners and end by singing the 'Doxology.'

"Now, gentlemen, are these men guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty!" came with another roar like thunder.

The two prisoners fairly quaked under the angry response of "guilty" to the question of the judge, and Buffalo Bill quickly arose and signified his desire to speak.

The judge rapped for silence, and said:

"We will hear what the great scout has to say."

"I would say, gentlemen, as a government officer, it is my wish to have full justice done these men.

"It is true that I caught them robbing a miner's cabin, or attempting to do so, but there are crimes far more heinous than that, and I beg that you will, in their case, give them as light a punishment as possible, for I am sure they will heed the warning they have had."

The words of the scout fell upon deaf ears when he made an appeal for mercy.

He might as well have attempted to stem the current of a river as stay that mad element of humanity, for all eyes turned from him to the judge, who said:

"You have heard the appeal of our distinguished friend for mercy, and we will be merciful.

"As these men have been unanimously pronounced guilty, our mercy will be not to long keep them in the agony of their approaching doom, and hence I do hereby sentence them to be taken within the hour to Hangman's Gulch, and there to be hanged by the neck until all life shall leave them, for the good order of this community must and shall be preserved."

Again a roar greeted these words, and, once more rapping for silence, the judge said:

"Officers, do your duty."

The two guards stepped forward, and over the head of each prisoner placed a noose.

Then the judge opened the Bible and read—just why, Buffalo Bill did not know—the story of Daniel in the den of lions.

This he followed with the Ten Commandments, dwelling particularly upon the Eighth—"Thou shalt not steal"—and making it more impressive by the question put to the prisoners as to whether they heard it or not, and repeating it to them.

Following this, three hundred voices sung the "Doxology," and then the judge arose, and, locking his arm in Buffalo Bill's, led the way to Hangman's Gulch.

The guards and their prisoners followed, the twelve men who were to draw the doomed men into midair each grasping the rope of their respective victim.

A slow and solemn step was kept to Hangman's Gulch, the many lanterns casting flickering shadows as they marched along.

At last the place was reached, already dotted with the graves of many men who had thus been tried and executed.

Into the dark, loathsome, weird place they filed, and soon approached the gallows where so many others had died.

The two prisoners were moaning like men in physical pain, for they were cowards at heart.

Then they began to plead for mercy.

But as well might they have appealed to the cliffs about them as to that crowd, for while some there were doubtless merciful, they were too greatly in the minority to dare speak what they felt.

The ropes were thrown over the beam, which was greased, and, at a signal from the judge, the twelve men upon each line drew their victims up into midair, silencing their cries for mercy.

Then back from Hangman's Gulch surged the crowd, laughing and talking over the affair as they went, and it was generally agreed that Pocket City would be the better for the hanging.

The Vigilante captain felt that he had done his duty, so repaired to his store in a very self-satisfied humor, while Buffalo Bill accompanied him for a short time, and began, in a quiet way, to question him about Bonnie Belle.

All he could learn was the fact that not a man in Yellow Dust Valley could say one word against her, all holding her as above reproach.

Nothing was known of her antecedents, and there was not the slightest suspicion that she was connected in any way with the road agents under Silk Lasso Sam.

She had gone East upon some business of her own, the storekeeper said, and Deadshot Dean, the miner, had been her escort, and, not aware that the latter was a married man, Scott Kindon hinted that he believed there was a strong feeling of friendship between the two.

This might result in marriage, and the "judge" hoped that it would, as the miner was a splendid fellow, in his opinion.

Then, learning that the driver of the stagecoach was in Pocket City that night, Buffalo Bill sought him out.

He found him at the Devil's Den, the gambling resort

of the place, having just won all the money at poker which his adversary had.

He greeted the scout pleasantly, said that he had come in a couple of hours before, and was glad to feel that the trail was free of outlaws.

"I wish to ask you, Pard Sandy, something about Bonnie Belle," said Buffalo Bill.

At once Sandy was all attention.

"Waal, pard, what kin I tell yer?"

"You took her in your coach when she went East?"

"Sure."

"And the miner?"

"Deadshot Dean?"

"Yes."

"He went along too."

"Where did you leave them?"

"Waal, she left me at the trail junction."

"And the miner?"

"He went on East on the regular coach."

"And Bonnie Belle?"

"She took the upper branch trail, via Omaha."

"East?"

"Yes."

And this answer caused Buffalo Bill to ponder deeply.

CHAPTER VII.

BUFFALO BILL ON A STILL-HUNT.

The manner in which Buffalo Bill meditated was thus: Now Bonnie Belle surely started East.

Why, then, did she leave Deadshot Dan at the Overland junction and take the upper trail, which led her through Chicago?

Why did she turn back unless she had received some word from the fort, where the outlaw was a prisoner?

"And you did not hear of her passing back over the trail?"

"See here, Buffalo Bill, you is chief of scouts at Pioneer Post, I knows well, and you has a right ter ask all questions of me, but I wants ter say if it's ter get Bonnie Belle inter trouble, I'll be a dumb man, sartin, and don't you fergit it."

"Pard Sandy, that little woman has no better friend than I am, and I would protect rather than do one act to cause her trouble; but I am on a secret trail, which I wish to see the end of, and you can help me by answering my questions and perhaps save much trouble, for I believe there is a plot on hand to rescue Sam Arden by force."

"The fact is, I did not hear of Bonnie Belle's going West ag'in, but I happen to know thet she did go, and that's all I can tell you."

"Well, I'll ask no more, Sandy, to-night at least."

"Good-night," and Buffalo Bill remained in the Devil's Den while the driver left it with his winnings in his pocket and quite satisfied with having won two months' pay within an hour, never taking into consideration that he had lost far more in the past few weeks.

The scout was the cynosure of all eyes as he leisurely strolled about the gambling saloon, going from table to table, risking a few dollars at faro, and winning, then being equally as lucky at roulette, *rouge et noir* and dice-throwing, when he received a challenge from a miner to play him a game of cards.

"Oh, yes, I'll play if you wish, though I had not intended to when I came in," said the scout.

"Waal, I plays for big stakes, and don't you forgit it," was the answer of the challenger.

Buffalo Bill took his measure in a steady look at him.

He thought that his face was familiar, but he was not sure, for he could not recall where he had seen him before.

He was a man even larger than the scout, for he was more brawny, weighing over two hundred pounds, and as hard as iron.

His face was bearded, his hair worn long, and he carried no knife in his belt, but instead four revolvers, two in front and one on each hip, so that no matter where he dropped his hand it must fall upon the butt of a "gun."

He wore no superfluous clothing, either; his miner's shirt, corduroy pants, topboots, and slouch hat, pulled down over his eyes, about making up his wardrobe.

The carrying of four revolvers had gained him the name of "Pistols," and that he knew how to use them, too, several graves upon Sunset Hill gave testimony.

He was peacefully inclined when not drinking, but when under the influence of liquor his best friends avoided him religiously, and those who saw him challenge Buffalo Bill to play cards felt that the scout had made a mistake in accepting, for they discovered that Pistols was drinking, and that meant a row, they were certain.

In answer to the remark of the man that he played for big stakes, Buffalo Bill asked in his quiet way:

"What do you call big stakes, pard?"

"What does I call big stakes?"

"Yes, that is the question I asked."

"Waal, I call a game without a limit big money."

"Are you able to stand a game without a limit?"

"Is I?"

"Ask my pards if I can't call yer at a thousand and pay if I loses."

"Oh, a thousand is your limit, then?"

"Can you match me?"

"If I could not I would not play with you; but when you said 'without a limit,' I wished to know what you meant, as you can size my pile at a thousand."

"Now you know what I can do, so say whether you will play or back down?"

"Back down?" yelled the miner, savagely.

"Yes," was the perfectly calm response.

"I never backs down ag'in any odds."

"Then play," said Buffalo Bill, in the coolest manner possible.

The interest in the games going on in Devil's Den very quickly was centered in the match between Buffalo Bill and Pistols.

"I'm out for scalps," the miner had said, in a voice that was heard all over the saloon.

At this Buffalo Bill looked him squarely in the face, and there was something in the look that controlled the man, and the scout said:

"I see now that you have been drinking."

"Had I suspected this I would not have played with you, for I never play with a drunken man."

"Behave yourself now, or quit before trouble follows."

There was that in the words and look which mastered the man, for he made at first no reply; but then he said:

"What did I say to make you mad?"

"Nothing, for I am not angry; but you said you were out for scalps, and I wish you to understand that I take the same trail when there is need for it."

The man appeared cowed, for he said:

"We don't want trouble, Buffalo Bill. Shall I git a fresh pack of cards and will yer take a drink?"

"Thank you, I do not care to drink, and you take my advice and let it alone."

"But get the cards."

An angry gleam came into the eyes of Pistols.

But he made no reply, and walked to the bar after a fresh pack of cards.

"Shuffles, give me a fresh pack and some whisky, too," he said.

"Here's the cards, Pistols, but take my advice and don't drink any more, for Buffalo Bill is a stranger here," said Shuffles.

"Waal, he wants ter git better acquainted with ther folks."

"Whisky, I said, straight, strong and blistering."

Had Bonnie Belle been there he would have refused.

But to do the best he could, he took a half-empty bottle, hastily poured water into it, and set it before the man, hoping to have him get but half the quantity.

The miner found it out, held it up to the lamp, and looked at it.

"Is this pale sherry, Shuffles?"

"It's whisky."

"You lies, for you have drowned it with water, so you kin hev it."

Quick as a flash he dashed the stuff full into the face of poor Shuffles, who, blinded and maddened, drew his revolver and fired a shot at random.

It was the last act of his life, for he dropped dead, with a bullet in his brain, while Pistols called out:

"He put water into my whisky, pards, and then shot at me, so I kilt him. There he lies ahind the bar."

To put water in whisky was a criminal offense which the miners of Yellow Dust Valley could not forgive or forget, and so Shuffles lost the sympathy of the crowd by his heinous act, while Pistols rose in their estimation for visiting just punishment upon one who would do such a thing.

"Now, Pard Studley, I wants some whisky," and Pistols turned to the bartender nearest, who quickly placed a fresh bottle before him.

Then, turning to those who had gathered about him, he said:

"J'ine me, folks, in a leetle beverage, for I'm bettin' high it will be ther Simon-pure article."

"Does yer catch on?"

They "caught on" with alacrity, and with the upturned, pallid face of Shuffles, the eyes wide open, staring into his own, Pistols poured his glass full to the brim and dashed it down his capacious throat.

A hush had fallen upon the crowd during this scene, and a few of the timid ones, or rather those who wished to avoid being in a row, silently withdrew from the building.

There were several who felt that Buffalo Bill was making a sad mistake in having accepted the challenge of Pistols, while others knew that had he not done so, in the then temper of the man, a row would have been precipi-

tated at once, for he would certainly have insulted the scout then and there.

A few now hastened to tell Buffalo Bill, who had not risen from his seat, that Pistols had just killed Shuffles, and had then taken a tumblerful of whisky, so was in a dangerous mood, and, having braced himself up to the right pitch by the liquor, he would seek an encounter.

"He didn't have quite enough ter brace him fer trouble with you, pard, for he has heerd o' you, as we all has, and that's why he got more."

"He's primed now, and will go off like a hair-trigger," a miner said.

"Yas, so jist go out and let him alone," another added.

Buffalo Bill smiled serenely.

It was a smile that some who saw it felt boded mischief.

Then he said, complacently:

"I never seek trouble, gentlemen, unless I am after a man I know needs running down, and duty compels me.

"I sought no trouble with your comrade, and merely accepted his challenge, so he can turn it into any game that suits his humor best."

"Here he comes now," cried a voice, and just then Pistols was seen approaching the table where Buffalo Bill sat, a cigar between his teeth.

With a lurch, Pistols dropped into his chair, and glared at Buffalo Bill.

"I has come back!" he said.

"So I see."

"There's ther pack o' cards," and he tossed them upon the table.

Buffalo Bill picked them up, glanced at them, and said:

"Yes, they are all right."

"Did yer think I'd git any as wasn't?"

"Not being acquainted with you, I didn't know."

"Waal, we'll git better acquainted, I'm thinking."

"Perhaps."

"Come, don't git skeered, fer I hain't goin' ter shoot, only I hed ter kill a feller over thar, just now, and I is loadin' my gun ag'in."

"You are very wise."

"Yer see, he insulted me."

"I can hardly believe that possible."

There were a number who heard this reply who appreciated its sarcasm.

Pistols felt that there was a meaning in it he could not fathom, so he did not try, and said:

"Yes, he put water in my whisky."

"Did he not know you?"

"Yas, only he tried to play a underhand game on me."

"We has been mighty good friends, Shuffles and me, for he has twice saved my life, and he meant well toward me, I is sartin, fearin' I sh'u'd git too much, so he put water in my whisky, and I'd kill my brother fer a insult like that."

"I can believe you; but may he not have been only wounded?"

"Yer don't know me, pard, for I never wastes powder and lead, but shoots to kill."

"I is sorry my poor pard Shuffles committed suicide, for he should have know'd me well; but he's out o' misery now, and I'll pay all ther expenses of ther funeral, and give him a beautiful send-off on ther trail ter glory, an' put up a stone over him with a inscription as a warnin'

to them who puts water in whisky, which I drinks ter git all o' ther leetle devil out of it I kin."

"Does yer tumble?"

"Oh, yes; but do you still wish to play with me?"

"Does I?"

"Yes."

"Why, pard, I is in fer a game o' anything with you."

"Then let us begin."

"All right, pard, I is ready."

The cards were shuffled, cut for the deal, and Buffalo Bill won.

Then the cards were thoroughly shuffled, and the game was begun.

All who watched the two men—and they were all who could crowd about them, saw that the scout was as cool as an icicle, showing not the slightest dread of what any one who was near felt sure must end in a deadly encounter between the two players.

Buffalo Bill serenely smoked his cigar, his face remaining impassive, and yet those who watched him closely saw that his eyes were rather upon his adversary than his cards.

The game was played more carefully by Pistols than those who saw him believed possible, for he was cautious in all he did and leered maliciously at Buffalo Bill when he gained a point.

At last he seemed to brighten up, and said:

"A hundred on my hand, Buffalo Bill."

"Mine is worth twice that sum."

"I'll add that more to mine."

"So will I," was the quiet response.

"I calls yer."

"Four aces," and Buffalo Bill laid the cards upon the table.

"Durn yer!" said the miner, without showing his hand, and the scout pocketed the money.

That Pistols felt his loss was evident to all, for his face grew darker and an uglier look came into his eyes.

"Well, how much is your hand worth, Mister Pistols?" asked the scout, when the climax of the second game came around.

"It's worth a hundred," and Pistols appeared confident then.

"No more?"

"Well, what is your hand worth?"

"Just five hundred dollars, no more, no less."

The miner started. Could it be possible that the scout held a better hand than he did this time?

No, it could not be. The lightning would not strike twice in the same spot.

"I jist says show up to ther tune of five hundred."

Buffalo Bill put up the money he had just won, adding more to it, and said:

"There, match that with five hundred."

The miner drew out a greasy buckskin bag, and took out a roll of bills.

He counted out very slowly five hundred dollars, and it could be seen that very little remained in the bag.

"Thar she goes, and yer needn't squint at ther bag, fer thar is more whar thet come from."

"Now I'm thinkin' your money is mine, so show yer hand."

"Four aces," said the scout, without the change of a muscle.

"Four aces!" roared the miner. "Four aces ag'in my four kings! How comes that?"

"You dealt, pard, and were more generous to me than to yourself," and Buffalo Bill very quietly put the money in his pocket, while he said:

"I'll play you another game to give you a chance to win back your money, or lose more, if you wish it."

"There's but one more game I'll play with you, Buffalo Bill, and that's with these," and the miner quickly leveled his revolvers.

CHAPTER VIII.

TURNING THE TABLES.

The miner's words and act at once cleared a lane behind Buffalo Bill and himself through the crowds that had gathered around.

But the act did not appear to disturb the scout.

If caught off his guard by the sudden drawing of his revolvers by Pistols, Buffalo Bill remained as cool as before, and said:

"Then you are willing to play a square game with me with revolvers, are you?"

"I is going to play a game with you, yes, but there's others in it besides, for I has something to say to you, Buffalo Bill."

"Talk fast then, old man, for life's short, you know."

"Oh, it'll be short enough to you when I tells what I knows ag'in you."

"What do you know?"

"I knows that you was ther cause o' havin' two innocent men strung up in Hangman's Gulch this night."

"I only wish I'd been at ther hangin', for them wouldn't hev been ther men thet got choked."

"I am listening."

"But me and my pard, Dave Dunn, got in too late ter save them poor murdered men, and when I heerd what had been done, says I, thet ar' Buffalo Bill will hev ter die ter-night, I'll jist be his heir by winning his money fu'st."

"So I axes yer ter play me."

"And I did."

"Yas, for sure."

"And I became your heir, as you put it."

"So far."

"Well, what else?"

"A heap, for I wants ter let ther folks know thet Dave Dunn and me were up in ther range and seen you breakin' inter ther cabin o' Deadshot Dean."

A murmur went through the crowd at this, while Buffalo Bill said, indifferently:

"Is that all?"

"Why, I feel relieved, for I was afraid you were going to accuse me of cheating you."

"Oh, no, yer played square enough, for I was a-watchin' yer; but we seen yer breakin' inter Deadshot's cabin, and Tom and Jerry caught yer at it."

"But you was too soon for them, got them under ther muzzle of yer gun and trotted them off as housebreakers when you was the thief."

"Why did you not at once come to their rescue?" asked Buffalo Bill, when the uproar which these words created had in a measure subsided.

"We was up in Eagle Nest Mountain, and it took us a

long time ter git down to ther valley and up to Pocket City.

"Then we found thet ther folks hed believed you, Buffalo Bill, ag'in them men, and it were too late."

"So we talked it over and thar is jist a large-size community here ter-night as says you has got ter hang, too."

"Why not make it by unanimous consent, Mr. Pistols, for it would sound better when reported at the fort to Colonel Dunwoody?"

The crowd gave vent to a murmur of admiration at the scout's pluck.

He did not appear to be in the least degree disturbed by the danger he most certainly was in.

"Oh, I knows yer is game, and I has just seen thet yer kin bluff, but thet don't go now."

"What does?"

"Ropes is trumps."

"You intend to hang me, then?"

"We does."

"Without judge or jury?"

"We have set on your case and it is ag'in yer."

"When am I to be hanged, please?"

"Afore dawn."

"Isn't that crowding matters a little?"

"No more than you crowded it ag'in' them two poor boys as was hanged to-night."

"And you saw me break into Deadshot Dean's cabin?"

"I did."

"And the other witness?"

"Was Dave Dunn."

"I do not believe anybody here who has common sense will believe any such charge against me," said the scout, while, with his elbows resting upon the table at which he sat, Pistols held his revolver in both of his hands and covering the heart of the scout.

"Yer don't believe it?"

"No, I don't."

"Pards, does I teil the truth?"

In his excitement the miner turned his head, and in that instant his revolver was struck upward and knocked from his hands by Buffalo Bill, who now held him covered with his weapon.

"A turn about is fair play, Mr. Pistols."

Some laughed at this, but Pistols swore roundly, yet dared not move, for he saw he was caught, the left hand of the scout lying upon his own weapon where it had fallen upon the table, the right holding his revolver within a foot of his eyes.

But the words of the miner had been answered by a savage chorus of voices, crying:

"You is right, Pard Pistols, for Buffalo Bill is the guilty man."

Still the pluck of the scout did not desert him, and he never changed expression at the outburst.

Encouraged by the cries of his comrades, though under cover of the scout's pistol, the miner said:

"See here, Buffalo Bill, you has half-a-hundred guns on you, but we don't intend ter shoot yer, but hang yer, as you got poor Tom and Jerry strung up, so up with yer hands, mighty quick, says I."

"Yes, up with your hands, Buffalo Bill!" shouted the crowd, savagely, while scores of revolvers covered the scout as he still sat at the table, facing the ringleader,

whom he yet held his revolver upon, the muzzle within a foot of his eyes.

It certainly did look bad for Buffalo Bill, and for two reasons:

First, the charge of Pistols, backed by Dave Dunn, a reputable miner, seemed to be believed by a great many of those present.

Second, the crowd that backed Pistols was not only numerous, but composed of the very worst element in the mines.

This shut off many who felt that the accusation was utterly false, from lending any aid.

Pistols was certainly in danger of instant death at the hands of the scout, but the latter was equally in danger of sudden death from the backers of his accuser.

Thus the situation rested until Buffalo Bill broke the silence with:

"See here, Pistols; I recall that ugly face of yours, now that I get a better look at it, and I remember you as one of Powder Face Pete's gang who ambushed me some time ago, under pretense that I was Silk Lasso Sam.

"You wished to get rid of me then, because I make this country too hot for just such men as you and your ilk are.

"Now, what are you going to do about it, Mr. Pistols, for, if I am facing death, you are just as close as I am to it, so begin business when you please, and you'll find that I'll never hang, and dying, will take company along, so as not to get too lonesome on the trail across the Dark River."

The splendid pluck of Buffalo Bill, at bay against a crowd, delighted many present.

But those who surrounded him were his foes, and the better element hung back, feeling that a terrible scene must follow the first shot fired.

Pistols felt his situation keenly.

The danger had sobered him, and his desire was to be able to see Buffalo Bill hanged by the crowd, and it began to look as though he would not be there to witness it.

This he did not want, and he felt how certain death was to him if his comrades pushed the scout to extremes.

Such was the situation, and the suspense to all was fearful, and especially to Pistols and the scout, though the latter was, as a miner expressed it to a pard:

"Beautifully serene."

What the result would have been was assured, for the crowd was becoming restless, and there were those who did not love Pistols and so would push matters to a climax to get him killed that they might then hang the scout.

But, just as it seemed that another instant must come a crash, a loud, stern voice rang out with:

"What does this mean, holding a government officer under your guns?

"Room, here, men!" and, hurling men right and left by his giant strength, as though they were children, the Surgeon Scout strode to the side of Buffalo Bill, who still sat at the table, covering the miner with his revolver.

A perfect yell of joy burst from many in the crowd, who thus gave vent to their pent-up feelings as they saw the splendid form of Frank Powell, the Surgeon Scout, in uniform, stride into the midst of the scene.

"Ah, Doc, just in time to keep me from killing this gent, and being made a target myself for half-a-hundred bullets," said Buffalo Bill, still unmoved by his rescue.

"It seems that I am just in time, Bill, and if I mistake not there are men in this crowd who will dangle at a rope's end for this work, if they harm a hair of your head.

"What does it mean?"

The ugly element in the crowd was still paramount.

It had only received a temporary check by the coming of the Surgeon Scout.

The greatest number of the miners present were now, however, decidedly upon the side of law and order, but the devil in the nature of the others was destined to lead them on to trouble.

They did not care whether Pistols died or not at the hands of Buffalo Bill. They hated Bill and his body-guard because they were the foes of the bad element in the mines.

They hated the army because it put down lawlessness.

Here was a chance to wipe out the chief of scouts and Surgeon Powell, both of whom they stood in the greatest awe of.

They, this ugly element, were sixty to two, and they had nothing to lose.

The army would swoop down upon the Yellow Dust Valley, of course, but who could be found who was guilty, who could be punished?

Thus the men who had backed Pistols argued, and with a desire for a row, a wish to sacrifice Buffalo Bill and the Surgeon Scout, and enough whisky in them to make them reckless of consequences, they began to crowd closely upon the center of attraction, where Cody sat still covering Pistols, and with the Surgeon Scout by his side, a revolver in each hand.

It was a most critical moment, for the officer and the scout saw that the authority of the latter was going to be defied.

"Men, don't mind what Brass Buttons says, for as he's chipped inter the game, he goes with Buffalo Bill.

"Don't shoot, for that means innocent men hurt, but capter them two gamecocks alive an hang 'em.

"Does I say right?" and the burly ruffian who had constituted himself leader gazed at the crowd with a look that demanded recognition.

The yell that greeted his words showed the temper of the crowd, which began to sway to and fro wildly, preparing for a rush upon the two men now at bay.

"I am sorry you came, Frank, for it only brings you into a tight place," said Buffalo Bill, in a low tone to the Surgeon Scout, and he at once drew a second revolver from his belt to have it ready, though he did not take his eyes off the miner whom he covered.

"I don't mind it, Bill, and I'm always ready to die, if need be, for a comrade.

"If they make a rush, kill that man, then stand back to back with me and let us make a record before we go under," was Frank Powell's response.

"I'm with you until sunset, Frank," rejoined Cody, and he added, addressing the miner:

"You started this circus, Mr. Pistols, but you won't see the end of it."

"Cuss you, I'll call 'em off if you'll call it quits," returned Pistols, eagerly, now thoroughly terrified when he saw another leader in the field who meant to precipitate matters independent of him.

"Pard, you talk in your sleep, for you could no more call off that pack than you could tell the truth."

"No, you set the tune, and the song must be sung through."

In the meanwhile the Surgeon Scout was watching the wildly-swaying crowd, which were gradually drawing closer about them, and he was just about to open fire, when there suddenly rang out a clear voice above the noisy hum:

"Hold! What does this mean, I should like to know?"

Instantly there was silence, intense in that it followed such an uproar.

Then hats were doffed, the crowd swayed apart, and toward the table where Buffalo Bill still held the miner under cover of his revolver, and the Surgeon Scout stood at bay by his side, glided Bonnie Belle, the owner of the place.

She was dressed in a blue dress, trimmed with silver braid, wore a slouch hat with a heavy sable plume and carried a revolver in each hand.

Behind her came Sandy, the driver of the Overland, and then Scott Kindon, the captain of the Vigilantes.

But Bonnie Belle neither needed aid nor asked it.

Her simple presence commanded respect.

They had deemed her far away in the East, and like an apparition she had glided through the door she always entered by, and her white face, now stern and threatening, showed that she was in no humor to be trifled with.

"Ah, Surgeon Powell, it is you, and you also, Buffalo Bill, whom these roughs hold at bay?"

"And for what?"

"I was scouting, Bonnie Belle, and came upon two men, Tom and Jerry they called them, breaking into Deadshot Dean's cabin."

"I made them prisoners, brought them here and the Vigilantes hanged them."

"To-night this man, whom I have covered, accused me of breaking into the cabin, and he was not long in getting willing hands to hang me, and but for the coming of Surgeon Powell it would have been over ere this."

"And I only checked the trouble for a few minutes, Bonnie Belle, as the men turned upon me also."

"I took Buffalo Bill's trail and followed him here, for somehow I feared he might need aid."

"You have saved us both by your timely coming, unless these gentlemen wish to push their quarrel to a conclusion."

But the gentlemen did not seem to be so inclined, or, if they did, the words of Bonnie Belle checked them, for she said, sternly:

"No, there will be no trouble here, for the man who raises a weapon against you I will kill."

"As for you, Pistols, if you ever enter my hotel or this saloon again, I will see that you do not do so a second time."

"Shuffles, do you hear what I say about this man?"

A silence most fearful followed, and, as no answer came, Bonnie Belle called again:

"Shuffles!"

"If you are calling your man left in charge here, Bonnie Belle, he is dead," said Buffalo Bill, as no one else seemed to care to speak.

"Shuffles dead?" she repeated, with a start.

"Yes."

"When did he die?"

"To-night."

"Ha! he was killed?"

"Ask one of your men here to tell you about it, Bonnie Belle."

She called a bartender, and was told the story.

She listened in silence, making no comment, and then turned to Scott Kindon and asked:

"Captain, is this not a case of murder?"

"It looks so, Bonnie Belle."

"This man Pistols has been carrying too high a hand for the safety and comfort of the good citizens in Yellow Dust Valley, and it appears to me that he needs disciplining by the Vigilantes."

"Say the word, Bonnie Belle, and he travels the trail to Hangman's Gulch," the Vigilante captain said, very decidedly.

Bonnie Belle was lost for a moment in thought, while Pistols gazed at her with a look of pleading and despair commingled.

At last she spoke:

"No, Captain Kindon, I will not say the word, for I wish no man's life upon my conscience, where it can be avoided."

"The mines will be the better for the taking off of those men, Tom and Jerry, and it would make it more respectable to rid us of this man Pistols."

"He has no mine or claim here, carries his fortune with him, I believe, so give him until sunrise to get out of the camp; while, that he may not be lonesome, let this man who was leading the attack upon Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill go with him."

"Shall it be so, comrades?" and Bonnie Belle glanced over the crowd, which answered with a yell that nearly raised the roof.

CHAPTER IX.

A MIDNIGHT INTERVIEW.

Pistols was too happy to escape with his life to grumble at anything that might be put upon him, and he was but too anxious to get away from the saloon and start upon his exile, feeling that there was safety only in placing many miles between himself and Yellow Dust Valley.

Dave Dunn, the other alleged witness against Buffalo Bill, had been led into making the charge by his comrade Pistols, and, seeing how matters were going, had slipped out of Devil's Den and hastened to his cabin to prepare for an immediate farewell to Pocket City.

The burly fellow who had made himself a leader against Surgeon Powell would have been glad to have escaped the notice of Bonnie Belle.

But her words had brought the eyes of the Vigilantes upon him, and he was anxious to get away, and so with Pistols skulked out into the darkness.

They had hastened to their respective quarters then, making an agreement to meet at Dave Dunn's in half an hour's time, and when the sun rose the two were making tracks down the valley, carrying their belongings upon a pole slung between two of them, and with all the wealth they possessed in their pockets.

"I would like to see you and Buffalo Bill, Surgeon Powell," Bonnie Belle had said, in a low tone,

"We are going at once to the hotel."

"I will see you there," and Bonnie Belle circled about the room, greeted everywhere with the most cordial welcome.

In the meanwhile Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill were congratulated on all sides by those who had not shown the nerve to come to their rescue.

But they received all that was said coldly, gauging it at about what it was worth, and passed out of the saloon to the hotel.

The scout already had a room there, and the surgeon was given one next to him, and so they repaired to them at once.

"It came over me, Bill, to follow you, and I might be of service.

"I am not superstitious, as you know, but I had a dream in which I saw you in a close place with Indians about you, and when I awoke it was all so vivid to me that I wrote the colonel a note, and started upon your trail without waiting until dawn.

"I went on to the end of Horseshoe Ned's run, and he told me you were going down to Pocket City, so here I came."

"And just in time, Frank, to save my life."

"It seems so.

"I was told you were here, so I went over to the Den and saw what was going on, so chipped in only too quick.

"But though I postponed matters for a while, we both would have been food for coyotes at this present time had not Bonnie Belle arrived as she did."

"And how did she come?"

"I do not know."

"She started East from the Junction."

"Well, she came here instead, fortunately for us—Come in!"

A Chinese servant entered and said:

"Missee say 'Melican man come with Chinaman.'"

This invitation was promptly accepted by the surgeon and the scout, and they were led by the Chinaman to the private quarters of Bonnie Belle.

There she had a supper spread out for them, though it was after one o'clock, and receiving them cordially, said:

"I wish to have a talk with you, gentlemen, and you will join me at supper, please."

They readily consented, the Chinaman waiting upon the table, and Bonnie Belle showing herself to be a most charming hostess.

The supper being over, and the Chinaman having departed, Bonnie Belle handed her guests a couple of fine cigars and said:

"I enjoy the fragrance of tobacco smoke, for to me a good cigar is fragrant, so please light them."

They did as told, and then Bonnie Belle threw herself into an easy-chair in a tired way, and said:

"I am really fatigued, for I have had a long ride since leaving the fort.

"I knew that you were upon my trail, Buffalo Bill, and I am glad that you were, as you came up in time to have served both Horseshoe Ned and myself well, but for the fact that our enemy had already been placed *hors de combat*."

"Yes, you are fully able to protect yourself, Bonnie Belle," said the scout.

"And others, too," remarked Surgeon Powell.

"Well, as I wished to throw you off the scent, I went on eastward by stage; but only for a couple of stations, where I secured a horse and guide, going across country to head off Sandy on his way here.

"I caught his coach and made him promise not to tell of my arrival, so he drove, as there were no other passengers, at once to the stables and I got out there and ran to my rooms here.

"It was Sandy who heard of the row in the Den, and he came for me, just as I intended going into the saloon as a surprise.

"Now I have a favor to ask of both of you."

"Granted before asked," said Surgeon Powell.

"Ditto," responded Buffalo Bill.

"You are very kind, to offer to grant me a favor without knowing what it is.

"Suppose I ask you something that you cannot conscientiously do?" said Bonnie Belle, with a smile.

"That is impossible, for you would not ask anything of us which we cannot conscientiously do," was the response of the surgeon.

"It is not too much to ask, I feel."

"It would have to be much, indeed, for us to refuse you, Bonnie Belle, for both of us owe you our lives, and you may be sure, if not profuse in thanks, we appreciate all that we are under obligations to you for," and Surgeon Powell's manner was really sincere.

"Do not speak of what I did, for one does not deserve either thanks or gratitude for doing one's duty.

"No, I only wished to ask you both not to betray me."

"Not to betray you?"

"Yes, for no one knows here, except you two gentlemen, that I am the sister of the condemned outlaw, Silk Lasso Sam. Not a soul do I wish to know it."

"And no one shall through me."

"Nor through word of mine," added Buffalo Bill.

"I do not care to have any one here know that I am the sister of the outlaw, for it would bring me under a suspicion here with many, and I wish to avoid this.

"Now I can do good, and I have a certain power over the wildest spirits here, which you had an opportunity to see yourselves to-night."

"We did, indeed," said Buffalo Bill.

"And it was in our behalf.

"You have, indeed, wonderful power over the wild savages that congregate here in Pocket City," the surgeon remarked.

"As the sister of the outlaw chief, no matter how innocent I might be, you can well understand how I would lose my power.

"A wicked man might influence them, yet not a wicked woman.

"It is only by holding myself pure in all things that I retain my influence, and I wish to be so respected unto the end."

"And permit me to say, Bonnie Belle, that I switch off your trail at once. I followed, for I believed that you intended to rescue your brother," said Buffalo Bill.

"I believed that you went to the fort to accomplish it by strategy, and finding yourself thwarted, gave it up. Then, I frankly confess, my idea was that you intended to accomplish by force what you had failed to do by strategy; that is, secure a number of men here who would follow your lead and thus rescue your brother."

"No, I would not accomplish his rescue, save his life even, by the taking of another life.

"What I could not accomplish by strategy I would not do by force."

"I can believe that of you now, since what you have done and said to-night."

"Let me tell you, Buffalo Bill, what I could have done to-night," said Bonnie Belle, eagerly.

"Yes."

"I could have seized both you and Surgeon Powell, sent you into hiding where your best scouts could not have found you, and there have held you as hostages to be given in exchange for my brother, or put to death if he was executed."

"You are right, for you surely could have done that."

"Without doubt," added Frank Powell.

"But I would not do so, and I would not be known as connected with the outlaw in any way, and I thank you both for your promise not to betray me.

"It is late now, so I will say good-night, and I will be glad to have you breakfast with me at nine, for that will give you seven hours' sleep.

"Good-night."

They bowed themselves out, both impressed with the thought that they had stood in the presence of a very superior woman and one as pure as a pearl, in spite of her surroundings and the calling she followed as mistress of The Frying Pan and the Devil's Den.

"Frank, I could not place a straw in the way of that girl to do her harm," said Buffalo Bill, as the two friends reached their room.

"I would protect her from harm with my life, Bill," was the Surgeon Scout's rejoinder.

"Do you know she takes the coming execution of her brother, loving him as she does, very coolly?"

"Yes, Bill, and it sets me to thinking."

"And me."

"You have an idea?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"That she may accomplish by strategy, after all, the rescue of the Robber of the Range."

"It may be, for she is a very clever woman, and one dangerous to balk when she sets her mind upon carrying out a plot."

"She is, indeed."

CHAPTER X.

CHARITY COVERS A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

The morning dawned upon Yellow Dust Valley with Pistols and Dave Dunn and their other ally, Maddox, making tracks out of the valley with an anxiety to place as many miles between themselves and the citizens of Pocket City in as short space of time as was possible.

Crowds are proverbially fickle, and the thought in the minds of the three fugitives was that the mob might decide to change its mind and hang them, when it came to attend the funeral of Shuffles, whom Pistols had so wantonly shot.

While these three were keeping up a quickstep for safety, as if by common consent, Pocket City was taking a holiday.

The miners had held open house at Devil's Den until

very late, or rather early, for the gray of dawn was visible in the east when the doors of the saloon were at last closed.

Business had been good for the saloon, and bad for many a gambler, and the employees were anxious to get the accounts straightened out before Bonnie Belle examined the sales, expenses and profits.

Shuffles had been a universal favorite, for he was always polite, obliging and generous.

He could never refuse a poor devil a drink, and would chalk the amount against himself, so that at the end of the month he would only have a small sum coming to him out of his wages.

Bonnie Belle had held the money back until just before her departure for the East, when she had placed him in charge of the saloon, and at the same time said to him:

"Shuffles, you have been here for several years, and Landlord Lazarus gave you the name of being a very honest man.

"In the past ten months you have charged to yourself nearly two-thirds of your wages for favors shown others who have never paid you.

"I have kept it back, as I knew that it would be loaned away or spent.

"I now hold for you the sum of what those amounts are, and its total is a trifle over eight hundred dollars.

"When it reaches a thousand I shall send it to your mother, of whom you have so often spoken to me, to keep for you, and who, you say, has a mortgage on her little farm which she and your two younger brothers are working hard to pay off.

"How much is that mortgage?"

Shuffles could hardly speak, his heart was so full of joy and gratitude.

But at last he faltered:

"It is eleven hundred dollars, miss, for I sent mother fifty dollars last week; but, oh! what can I do to thank you for your goodness to me?"

"Act as squarely by me as you have done in the past, and manage the Den for me until further instructions."

"I will, miss, I will."

And upon the very night of Bonnie Belle's return, poor Shuffles shuffled off this mortal coil, murdered for doing a kind act in preventing Pistols from getting drunk, unmindful of the terrible fate of a man who waters another man's whisky.

There was no contract between Bonnie Belle and her dead clerk, but the morning after his death she arose, and her first duty was to write a long letter to his mother, stating that he had been shot by a desperado, whom he had once saved from being killed.

She also stated that he should be buried with proper decency, and that his effects should be sent to her at once, by express, along with twelve hundred dollars salary in her hands, due him, while a purse contributed by the miners she begged her acceptance of, as it would show in what esteem her dead son was held by those among whom he associated.

Not a word as to his calling, or a word to cast a shadow upon the mother's love for her son was written.

Bonnie Belle had just finished her letter when Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill were ushered into her pleasant sitting-room by Sly Cheek, the Chinaman, who deserved his name most certainly.

She welcomed them pleasantly, told them of her letter to Shuffles' mother, and added:

"Pocket City was up all night, so is resting now, for it is arranged to give poor Shuffles a grand funeral this afternoon."

"An itinerant organ-grinder was shot here some months ago, and his instrument has been pressed into service as a brass band, while a quartette of really fine voices are rehearsing a hymn which some clever fellow has discovered can be sung to the air of 'Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Are Marching,' the chorus being an original one written by a poor poet here who gave up the pen for the pick and has made a failure with both."

"You surely will remain to the funeral, gentlemen, of poor Shuffles, for it would be a mark of respect the miners would never forget you for showing?"

"Outside of that inducement, Bonnie Belle, I would not miss it for the world," said the surgeon scout, with enthusiasm.

"Yes, I know we should enjoy it," Buffalo Bill added, absent-mindedly, his eyes upon a two pound venison steak which Sly Cheek had just helped him to.

"Enjoy it, Buffalo Bill?" said Bonnie Belle, reproachfully.

"No, I mean we should be delighted to attend, for if there is anything that will keep me away from church on a Sabbath day it is to attend a first-class border funeral, when the chief mourner is generally the man who turned up the toes of the lamented corpse."

"We will see Shuffles laid to rest, Bonnie Belle, and, as you spoke of raising a purse for his mother, let me offer you now a hundred dollars of my winnings last night."

It was when the bugle sounded at noon, calling the miners to dinner at The Frying Pan, that Pocket City really awoke to the situation.

Scott Kindon, the Vigilante captain, set the example of respect by closing his store and hanging in front of it a piece of black calico.

The Devil's Den had not been opened after its night closing, and the door had been tastefully draped by Bonnie Belle with crepe.

The body of Shuffles, dressed in his best, was laid out upon the piazza of The Frying Pan, in a coffin which, though not a perfect fit, was at least a good covering for the dead.

A United States flag, brought into requisition on all occasions, was spread over the coffin, and two miners stood guard over the remains, rifles in hand, and it is safe to predict that had Pistols put in an appearance then he would have been at once placed in the same condition of the lamented Shuffles.

The crowd began to gather from one end of the valley to the other, and miners came up with the hand-organ of the dead grinder in a wheelbarrow, one to furnish the means of locomotion, while the other turned the crank.

Placing the organ at the foot of the coffin one of the miners began to play, and all during dinner such airs were ground out as:

"Johnny Comes Marching Home," "The Girl I Left Behind Me," "A Life on the Ocean Wave," "John Brown's Body," and others more or less suited to the occasion.

There were many extras who took dinner at The Fry-

ing Pan that day, so that the Chinese servants were kept busy; but there was enough for all, for Bonnie Belle kept a generously supplied table, and there was never heard the slightest murmur of discontent.

At last Bonnie Belle appeared upon the piazza, and, as the bars had all been closed, she looked upon a sober crowd, though not a few were still unsteady from the effects of drinking the night before.

At her appearance every headgear was raised, for it would be a misnomer to designate them as hats, for they wore sombreros, slouches, caps, coonskin and all other varieties.

There was the silence, too, that always greeted her, even the organ leaving off its grinding.

She was dressed in black, slouch hat, sable plume and all, as a mark of respect, and carried in her hand a small basket.

"Comrades," she said, with one of her sweetest smiles, and placing her hand gently upon the head of the dead man lying in the coffin.

"Comrades, I thank you all for coming here, for we are burying to-day a friend, one whom we can all call by that sacred name, a name so often abused."

"You know poor Shuffles as he was yesterday, the day before and always, true as steel, generous to a fault, and a good man as far as he understood right and wrong."

"You know that he was murdered, while he sought to do a kindness."

"But you do not all know that he had a poor mother in the far-away State of Connecticut, living upon a farm which she and her three sons were trying to free from debt."

"The oldest son lies here, dead, and no help will she ever get from him now."

"So it is that I ask you, in your generosity, to contribute as you can and will, to the purse I wish to raise and send to her."

"One of our guests here, Buffalo Bill, was the first to volunteer, and most liberally, and he was followed by his comrade in arms, Surgeon Frank Powell, and now I ask all to come forward and contribute their mite, be it ever so little."

She turned to Buffalo Bill, and he dropped a roll of bills into the basket; Surgeon Powell did the same, and then the employees of The Frying Pan and Devil's Den followed, after which the miners came forward in a steady stream, while, not to be outdone, the Chinese servants "clubbed in" for the mother of the dead "Melican man."

"Surgeon Powell, will you please count this contribution and state to the donors just what it amounts to?" asked Bonnie Belle.

The surgeon scout obeyed, and answered:

"Gold dust valued at five hundred dollars, bills amounting to four hundred and fifty, gold pieces, one hundred and sixty, and silver, one hundred and forty, with a score of I. O. U.'s amounting to a hundred dollars."

"I will cash those I. O. U.'s, and that makes a most generous contribution of thirteen hundred and fifty dollars," said Bonnie Belle.

This important ceremony over with, the pallbearers were called, the body was taken up and the cortege

started for Sunset Hill, Bonnie Belle escorted by Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill, and the miners following in fours, while the hand organ led the way with "The Campbells Are Coming" and "John Brown's Body."

Arriving at the grave the hymn was sung by the quartette to the tune of "Tramp, Boys, Tramp," all joining in the original chorus written by the miner poet, with a will that sent a roar of melody down the valley to rebound from the distant cliffs with many an echo.

Then the body was lowered into the grave, while Surgeon Powell took up a shovel and said, in his deep, sympathetic voice:

"We commit this body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust."

Then as all stood with bowed, uncovered heads, there arose upon the air a voice full of melody and pathos, singing:

"Nearer my God to Thee."

From beginning to end in her superb, rich tones, Bonnie Belle sang the beautiful hymn, and, when the last word was uttered, teardrops rolled across faces furrowed and brown which had not been wet with tears since childhood; and manly hearts heaved convulsively with emotions which overwhelmed them, and many a miner went to his cabin home from Sunset Hill a better man for the burial he had witnessed of poor Shuffles.

CHAPTER XI.

A STATE DETECTIVE.

Buffalo Bill and Surgeon Powell were riding slowly upon the trail to the fort.

They had left Pocket City early that morning after passing another night there, and had ridden slowly along homeward, for the fort was the home of the soldier and the scout.

After the burial of Shuffles they had returned to The Frying Pan, where they were entertained by Bonnie Belle most delightfully, for she had sung for them, played the cornet, and been most agreeable in every way.

The Devil's Den had been kept closed out of respect for the dead manager, and a Sabbath-day stillness rested upon the camp.

The Vigilante opened his store to turn an honest penny, and the gambling dens, for the Devil's Den did not have a monopoly by any means, had opened wide their doors to catch those miners and loafers who would drop in.

The Frying Pan had fed an enormous crowd at supper and then settled down to rest.

One of the rules of Bonnie Belle, and which was religiously respected, was that the Devil's Den should never open on Sundays, and the miners seemed really glad of this respite from the noisy bustle of the place and the gambling and drinking which was sure to come.

When the officer and scout bade her good-night and good-by, for they said they were to leave at an early hour the next morning, she asked, with a smile:

"And is this to swing around the circle, Buffalo Bill, and still play the detective upon me?"

"Indeed it is not," answered the scout.

"I am glad of it, for we must be friends, you know."

"We certainly shall be, if I am to have my way," said the scout, warmly.

"And we are also to be friends, Dr. Powell, for candidly, I will not do ought to cause either of you any trouble, and if I fight you, should anything turn up to cause me to do so, it shall be by strategy, not force."

"Then we may as well acknowledge ourselves beaten when we are to measure strength in strategy with a woman," said Surgeon Powell.

"For shame—to acknowledge defeat before the combat! It is not like you, Dr. Powell."

"I am dealing with a woman now, Bonnie Belle, not a man."

"Well, do not you or Buffalo Bill track me, for it will do no good, I assure you.

"I know that you wish to thwart me in setting my brother free, and from your standpoint you are right.

"But all that I could do in the matter I have done."

"And failed?" said Buffalo Bill, with a smile.

"I leave that for you to decide, gentlemen.

"But, good-night."

She grasped the hand of each in her frank way, and they left her.

When they went to pay their score, the clerk told them that there was no charge against them, as they were the guests of the fair mistress of The Frying Pan.

They could but accept the courtesy, and the clerk said that an early breakfast had been ordered for them.

And so the next morning they turned their backs upon Pocket City, and took the trail for Pioneer Post.

Their way led by the Hangman's Gulch, and they turned in there to have a look at the numerous graves of the victims who had suffered there, dying at the end of a rope.

The two freshly made graves of Tom and Jerry were there, and as he looked at them Buffalo Bill said:

"Twice have I come very near being placed here, Frank."

"You have indeed, Bill."

"Once Deadshot Dean saved me from Powder Face Pete and his gang, and you saved me the next time by your timely arrival, for those fellows intended hanging me."

"And Bonnie Belle saved us both, Bill," was the answer."

As they neared the fort they came in sight of the stage trail, and upon reaching it heard the rumbling of the coach behind them.

A few moments after the coach came in sight, and by the side of Horseshoe Ned a stranger sat upon the box.

"Ho, Surgeon Powell, how is yer, and you, too, Bill?" cried Horseshoe Ned, as the coach drew up to the two pards just as they came within sight of the fort.

"All right, thank you, Ned.

"Have you seen any road agents this trip?" asked the Surgeon Scout.

"You bet I hain't on the run back, doctor, but I has a pilgrim inside who held me up when I was going east, as I guess Buffalo Bill told yer."

"Yes, he told me what a dead shot your lady passenger proved to be."

"Dead shot? Now I should remark! but she is ther deadeest of ther dead shots and no mistake. She's one among a thousand and no harm said ag'in t'others; but

I guesses yer hev ter doctor him up, sir, for he's been in the hands o' that old Pills at ther station and maybe he don't know much about doctorin'."

"All right, Horseshoe Ned, I'll do all I can for him; but you appear to have several passengers along on this run?"

"You bet I has, sir, three passengers besides ther outlaw who is crippled in both arms.

"This gent ridin' with me I don't know by name, or I'd interdooce yer."

Thus urged, the man riding on the box with Horseshoe Ned said:

"My name is Raymond, sir, Henry Raymond."

"Ah, yes, I remembers hearing your pards call yer thet name now.

"These gents, Mr. Raymond, is Surgeon Powell, o' ther cavalry, and Buffalo Bill, chief of scouts, and they is among ther best men thet ever is seen in these parts."

All bowed at the introduction, and the scouts kept up with the coach until it reached the fort.

The man that had given his name as Raymond was one who possessed the look of one to be depended on in a time of need.

He was well built, quick of action and had dark, piercing eyes that were most penetrating.

The other two passengers were heavily-bearded men, such as might be found anywhere on the frontier.

As Henry Raymond dismounted from the box he turned to Surgeon Powell, who had just gotten off his horse, and said:

"You are an officer at the fort, I believe, sir?"

"Yes, the surgeon of the post."

"I would like to see the commandant, sir, Colonel Dunwoody?"

"I will conduct you to him if you wish."

"I thank you, sir," and the stranger joined the surgeon and the scout who were going to headquarters to report their return.

Colonel Dunwoody was seated upon the piazza of his headquarters smoking an after-dinner cigar, and was alone when the party arrived, for the two other passengers had come along also, Henry Raymond remarking that they were friends of his.

"Ah, Powell, glad to see you back, and you, too, Cody, for after getting word that you had gone off on the trail I began to fear that after all the redskins might have gotten hold of Buffalo Bill."

"No, sir, the redskins did not catch him, for we have not seen an Indian; but I found him in a very tight place.

"But I'll explain later, as this gentleman whom Horseshoe Ned introduced as Mr. Henry Raymond, for he and his comrades came in on the coach, desires to see you, sir."

The colonel turned at once to the strangers, and said, addressing the leader of the three:

"How can I serve you, Mr. Raymond?"

"I desire, sir, to present my card and this letter, given me by General S—," said Raymond, and he handed over a card and letter.

The former had on it:

HENRY RAYMOND,

PINKERTON DETECTIVE AGENCY,
Chicago, Ill.

The letter bore the official stamp of the military headquarters at Chicago, and was as follows:

SIR:—A question having arisen between the civil and military authorities, regarding the right for you to hold and try the prisoner now in your keeping, known as Silk Lasso Sam, the outlaw thief, and now under sentence of death, I have consulted the Attorney-General through the Secretary of War, and the result is that you are hereby ordered to turn over to Detective Henry Raymond the said prisoner, upon presenting to you the requisition from the Governor of the State of Illinois for his body, through the authorized officer of the law.

This letter was signed by the assistant adjutant-general for General S—, and the colonel read it over with an expression upon his face which was hard to fathom.

"You have the requisition, Detective Raymond, referred to in this letter?" asked the colonel, quietly.

"I have, sir.

"Here it is, Colonel Dunwoody," and the detective at once presented an official-looking document, which read as follows:

Whereas Austin Arden, *alias* Silk Lasso Sam, having broken the laws of the State of Illinois, by the crimes of murder and robbery, I hereby make requisition of the military commander holding the said Austin Arden a prisoner, and under a sentence of death by military court, to deliver to my authorized agent, Henry Raymond, detective, the body of the said Austin Arden, *alias* Silk Lasso Sam, for trial in the civil court of the State of Illinois.

Signed, etc.

"The stage does not return for several days, Detective Raymond, and before its departure you shall receive my answer," said Colonel Dunwoody, after reading the papers handed to him by the officer.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURGEON'S MISSION.

When Detective Raymond had departed from headquarters with his two friends, the colonel turned to Surgeon Powell and Buffalo Bill, who had seen that from some cause the colonel was greatly moved.

"Sit down, Powell, you and Cody, for I wish to talk to you," said the colonel, and he added:

"I am very glad that you are here."

They both obeyed, and the colonel lighted another cigar, and after smoking it for a couple of minutes tossed it away.

"Tobacco always soothes me," he said, by way of explanation.

Then brightening up, he continued:

"Let me ask pardon for my delay, but the truth is was both nonplused and pleased by the news brought by that gentleman, Raymond.

"He is a State detective, an officer of the law, and brought me this letter from General S—, which will read to you."

This the colonel did, the two listening most attentively.

"This," he continued, "is a requisition from the Gov-

governor of Illinois for the prisoner, Austin Arden, or Silk Lasso Sam, as he is also known.

This also was read, the surgeon and the scout making no comment.

The colonel then continued:

"There seems to be in this a reflection upon my course in having at once tried this man by military court, which sentenced him to death upon the gallows.

"Out here on this border my word is law, and the outlaw has had a price set upon his head for breaking the laws of the land, for committing crimes untold, and he richly deserves his fate.

"The proof against him was perfect, and I sentenced him to death by hanging, at a certain date.

"Now, it must be that General S— gave out my report to the papers, the man was recognized as an old offender, who had broken the laws of the State of Illinois, and the State has sought to gain possession of him, to try him by civil process.

"Now he may, or may not be hanged, according to the law known by his lawyer, or his brilliancy as an orator, for most cases hang on these two things.

"Of course he will be back here soon after, again working the trails as a road agent.

"If sent to prison, he will be pardoned out by the next governor who may be of his political creed, who hopes to gain a few votes thereby for his clemency, and if hanged, then he saves us the trouble of swinging him up.

"Now, this is the point that pleases me, for I am very glad that I will not be the one to have to sign his death warrant or send him to the gallows.

"That is an honor I shall gladly yield to the Governor of Illinois.

"But, Surgeon Powell, you spoke last week of desiring to run to Chicago upon important business of your own, and I desire to say that I will make you the bearer of my dispatch to General S—, giving all the papers in the matter, which can be used against this man upon his trial there, and which will go far toward hanging him, a result most devoutly to be desired."

"I thank you, Colonel Dunwoody, and I appreciate the honor."

"You are to see the State's attorney and place him in possession of all the facts of the case against this outlaw, and yet this is to remain a secret, as I do not wish to be thought to influence the case, though of course the just deserts of the man is hanging.

"You can therefore get ready to return with Detective Raymond and his prisoner, and be especially careful that he does not escape them, for he is no ordinary man, and they may not be accustomed to the ways of this wild land."

"I will endeavor to obey your orders in all things, Colonel Dunwoody."

"I know that well, Dr. Powell.

"But say nothing of your going, only be ready to start on the coach with the prisoner and his guards."

"I will, sir."

After a few other words of instruction from Colonel Dunwoody, Surgeon Powell left headquarters, accompanied by Buffalo Bill.

The scout accompanied the doctor to his quarters, and there seemed to be something upon his mind.

At last he said:

"Frank, did you see those papers?"

"What papers?"

"The letter from the general and the requisition of the governor?"

"Yes, I saw them."

"I thought I noticed you reading them once."

"I did. But why?"

"Were they regular?"

"Perfectly."

"Seal, letter heading and all?"

"Everything was regular, Bill."

"Why do you ask?"

"I do not know, unless being a scout detective makes me suspicious of everything nowadays."

"Yes, and I feel the same way in many things."

"Well, you are going along, so if there is anything wrong I will be glad to know that you will be on hand to thwart it.

"What do you really suspect, Bill?"

"I don't know, but I am as suspicious as a coyote."

"Well, as you say, I will be along and will keep my eyes open, and I will go prepared for work.

"I am glad that you gave me a hint, for I was not at all suspicious in that quarter, I admit, and now I will be upon my guard," and as the scout turned away to go to his quarters, Frank Powell looked after him a moment and muttered:

"Yes, Bill, you have set me to thinking."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SCOUT'S REQUEST.

Horseshoe Ned, always an important personage in the eyes of many, was particularly so on the morning of his departure for the East with no less a person as a passenger than Silk Lasso Sam.

He had told over and over again the story of his last run out, and had brought with him as evidence of Miss Arden's deadly shooting the outlaw wounded in both arms, and who had been placed under guard in the hospital.

Now he was to go out with Silk Lasso Sam and the three detectives.

He had another passenger, just whom he had no knowledge of, but the box seat had been engaged for some one who was to go along.

The coach rattled up to its starting place, the mail was put aboard and instructions given and the three detectives stood ready to receive their prisoner.

Presently a squad of soldiers was seen approaching and in their midst was the tall form of the outlaw chief.

He walked upright with soldierly step, and looked about him as he halted at the stage station with calm indifference.

A very large crowd had gathered to see him off, and as the guard halted they were anxious to get a look at his face."

The officer in charge, after coming to a halt, asked:

"Is Mr. Raymond, the detective here?"

Henry Raymond stepped forward and said:

"I am Detective Henry Raymond, sir."

"I have orders to surrender into your keeping this prisoner, known as Silk Lasso Sam."

"I am ready to receive him, sir."

"Then please sign this receipt."

The officer drew from his belt a paper which the detective carefully read, and stepping into the stage office, signed.

"Thank you, sir."

"The prisoner is now in your charge," and ordering the sergeant to march the guard back to the guard-house, the officer turned upon his heel and walked leisurely away, as though there was no more interest in the case for him.

The detective ordered the prisoner to enter the coach, assisting him, as both his hands and feet were manacled; the others followed, and Henry Raymond called out:

"All ready, driver."

"I'm all ready, too, but I have orders to wait a few minutes."

But a moment after Surgeon Powell hastily approached and leaping to the box seat said:

"Let her go, Ned."

"The seat was for you, then, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then she goes."

The whip cracked and the team went rapidly away down the hill toward the stockade gate.

Soon after the stage rolled out of sight in the distance, and Horseshoe Ned, having given the idea to the uninitiated in stage travel that he kept up that speed all the way, now drew the horses down to a slow pace for the long drive ahead.

Hardly had the coach disappeared when Buffalo Bill walked up to headquarters.

The colonel, with a relieved look upon his face, was seated upon the piazza.

"Ah, Cody, any news?" asked the colonel.

"Not any, sir; but I came to ask leave to go on a trail for a few days?"

"Any definite point in view, Cody?"

"Well, no, colonel, only I thought I would like to follow Horseshoe Ned's coach."

"You have some motive for asking this, Cody?"

"Yes, sir."

"Out with it."

"The coach carried a very valuable freight, sir, in the person of Silk Lasso Sam."

"Yes, and you think that he may escape?"

"Well, sir, it has been rumored about that he was to go by this coach, and it may be that an attempt at rescue might be made."

"Impossible."

"Why impossible, sir?"

"He is well guarded by three determined men, while Surgeon Powell and Horseshoe Ned are along, and I do not believe a force could be raised at short notice that would dare attack those five."

"Still, sir, Silk Lasso Sam has many friends, and those who sought to curry favor with him might attempt a rescue."

"There is something in this."

"I will start at once, sir," was the scout's reply, and he saluted and walked rapidly back to his quarters.

Anticipating that the colonel would grant his request for him to follow the coach, Buffalo Bill had already prepared for his going, and had his horse awaiting him,

the very best animal that he had, and he was never known to have an inferior one.

Ten minutes after his request was granted the scout was riding out of the stockade, and once out of sight of the fort, went on at a very rapid pace, for the coach had all of ten miles the start of him.

Buffalo Bill's long life upon the border had made him watchful, cautious, nifty and cunning.

He had all the attributes to make a great borderman, and he could bring into play his every talent and energy when it was needed.

He had a suspicion that constantly grew upon him that there might be a rescue of the prisoner attempted.

Did not Bonnie Belle know something, he wondered, of this intended requisition from the governor and thus prepare for the rescue when the opportunity offered?

Might she not meet the detectives on the way with their prisoner, and with unlimited money at her command, gain by strategy and bribery what could not be done by force?

So argued the scout, and that was why he wished to go on the trail of the coach.

He rode lively until out of sight of the fort.

Then he dismounted, gave his horse a drink of water at a stream, tightened his saddle girths and looking at his watch, said:

"Just two hours since Ned left."

"That means, as he drives, all of twelve miles from this point."

"I should overtake him about Deep Dell Brook or a little beyond, only I do not wish to get close enough to be seen by them."

Mounting then, he put his horse into a swinging canter and held him to it for miles, when he reached the country where the hills grew steep and long.

Two hours after leaving the fort he halted for a short rest and said:

"The coach is about six miles ahead now, I take it, if Ned is on schedule time."

Again he resumed his way and for another long time held on when he descended into Deep Dell Brook.

Just as he halted his horse for water, confident that the coach could not be very far from him then, his eyes fell upon the trail beyond.

There was something in it which caught his eye.

It was a revolver.

He spurred toward it, dismounted and cried:

"It's Frank Powell's revolver!"

He looked about him and saw tracks of horses, blood stains, footprints and the evidence of a struggle.

Instantly he leaped into his saddle and his horse was sent flying on up the hill.

A mile ahead he caught sight of the coach, and it was driving rapidly.

He had no time to lose in overtaking it, so drawing his revolver, he fired several shots.

The sound reached the ears of Horseshoe Ned, who glanced back, saw who it was, and, wheeling his team in a broad space of the trail, drove back to meet the scout with all speed.

He soon drew rein and the scout dashed up and leaped from his horse.

"Ho, Ned, what is the matter?" called out Buffalo Bill.

"Matter enough, Bill, for the doc, the detectives and the prisoner is gone."

"Gone where?"

"Don't know."

"Why don't you know?" angrily said the scout.

In answer Horseshoe Ned turned the back of his head and said:

"See there, Bill."

"It's a wound."

"It's something."

"My poor Ned, what has happened?"

"Durned ef I know, for I'm kinder dazed like."

"Tell me what you can."

"I will."

"You were held up."

"I don't know," and the driver passed his hand across his head and said:

"It pains me, Bill."

"Come, Ned, get down from your box, for there is a brook, and let me dress that wound, for I have a needle and thread and can stitch it up for you, for it is an ugly-looking gash.

"Then tell me all you can remember."

The driver obeyed without a word, allowed the scout to take the stitches in the wound without flinching and fixed his handkerchief over it, wet with arnica which Buffalo Bill always carried with him.

"It feels better now, Bill, thankee."

"Oh, you'll come round all right soon," and the scout said no more, for he did not wish to hurry the driver and perhaps fret him, in the condition in which he then was.

After a few moments of silence Ned said:

"I think it was a rock, Bill."

"What was?"

"That struck me."

"Ah, and it was at Deep Dell Brook?"

"Yes, the horses were drinkin' thar, and doc and me was talkin', when suddenly came a blow that knocked me clear off the box, for I was down on the ground just out of the stream when I came round.

"The team was standing near me, just waitin' like human's for me ter come round, and when I tried to git up I found I was uncommon dizzy.

"But I did git up at last, and then I see thet ther mail bags was gone, and I scrambled up to my box as best I could and come on.

"I don't know no more about it than you does, Bill, save that thar is one of them detectives dead inside the coach, and he 'pears to hev been robbed, too, for I recommember thet he hed a watch and chain."

Buffalo Bill sprung quickly to the coach door, threw it open, and there he beheld a dead man.

It was Henry Raymond.

CHAPTER XIV.

BUFFALO BILL'S MAD RIDE.

As Buffalo Bill gazed at the dead detective he saw that there was a bullet wound in his heart.

There was evidence that he had also been robbed, though in searching through the pockets of the man he found a bundle of papers which he at once took possession of.

He mounted to the top of the coach and saw there red stains and indications of a struggle.

The gripsack of Surgeon Powell and the baggage of the prisoner and the detective were also missing.

At last Buffalo Bill said, as though at a loss to know what to do:

"Ned?"

"Yes, Bill."

"You are able to drive on to the station?"

"I am."

"Then continue on your way, and report your having been held up on the road, and all that you can remember that occurred."

"I will."

"I must return to the fort at all speed, and I am going to take one of your horses, to enable me to give mine a rest, for I shall stake him out in the Deep Dell Brook Valley, for the trail is to be taken up from there.

"You can rig one horse in the lead, can you not?"

"Easy, to oblige you, Bill, for I see that you is hot for scalps."

"I am, so give me your best horse."

"I'll do it."

"If I kill him I'll replace him, but I can make good time to the fort, make my report, have my scouts and a troop follow, and ride a fresh horse back to Deep Dell Brook.

"There I will find my horse well rested, and leaving the other animal for the scouts to pick up, I can get along on the trail of the outlaws who did this deed a long way before night, making my way for those coming after me to follow rapidly."

"You've got ter do some tall riding, Buffalo Bill."

"All right, I'll do it, for remember, my best pard, Frank Powell, is either dead or a prisoner."

"That's so."

"Take the roan mare, Bill."

"She's an all-day animal, and willing."

Buffalo Bill hastily threw the harness off the roan mare, put his saddle and bridle on her, and bidding Horseshoe Ned good-by, led his own horse down to a secluded spot upon Deep Dell Brook.

There he staked him out, and leaping into the saddle, sent the roan mare off like an arrow.

He had just twenty-five miles to go to reach the fort, and in two hours and a half he dashed through the stockade gate, and up to the colonel's quarters, the gallant roan dropping dead as the scout sprung from his saddle.

The colonel heard of his rapid coming, and met him on the piazza, where there were a number of officers and ladies.

"Colonel Dunwoody, I have to report overtaking the coach a mile beyond Deep Dell Brook, sir, and found Horseshoe Ned half-dazed from a wound in his head, made, I believe, by a rock, and inside the stage the dead body of Detective Raymond, shot through the heart.

"He had been robbed, as also the coach of the mail and the luggage it carried, while Surgeon Powell, the prisoner, and the other two detectives were missing.

"There was an evidence of a severe struggle, sir, so I took one of Ned's horses and rode back, leaving mine to rest, while, as I came through the gate I ordered an-

other horse which I will return on at once, so as to take the trail before night.

"With your permission, sir, I would like to take a dozen of my men, and ask for Captain Caruth, with a score of his troopers, to follow me, for I will mark my trail well, sir."

"Cody, you are worth a hundred men at any time, and I can now understand your riding your horse to death.

"There comes Texas Jack with another animal for you, so give him your orders and do you start back at once, while your scouts can follow, and Captain Caruth will take his entire troop, for there must be no mistake about catching those fellows who have been guilty of this outrage."

With a salute to the colonel, Buffalo Bill turned to his fresh horse, Texas Jack having taken the saddle and bridle from the dead animal and placed them upon the one he had led up for his chief.

"Jack, get twelve of the men and provisions in plenty and follow me at once to Deep Dell Brook, where Captain Caruth and his troop are coming also."

"We will be there, Bill," was the answer of Texas Jack.

Dropping into the saddle, with a wave of his hand, Buffalo Bill dashed away like the wind.

"Deep Dell Brook in two hours at that pace, and another dead horse," said Texas Jack, as he saw his chief dash away like the wind, settling himself in his saddle as he started down the hill, as though it really was his intention to reach the scene of the tragedy in two hours or kill the horse he rode.

The scouts were ready fifteen minutes after the departure of Buffalo Bill, and within half an hour the troop of Captain Caruth rode out of quarters on their path.

The scouts, twelve dashing fellows under Texas Jack, the well-known borderman, had settled down to a quick trot, and were just disappearing from sight in the distance when Captain Caruth, one of the officers at the fort, started off with his men at a pace very little less rapid.

It was an hour before sunset when the scouts reached the Deep Dell Brook.

They threw themselves from their horses to give them a rest, and they set about looking for "signs."

The first thing they discovered was the horse ridden by Buffalo Bill.

The animal was standing dead beat in the edge of the stream, panting like a hound, and his appearance indicating that Buffalo Bill had gotten there with ample time to be far on the trail of the outlaws by that time.

Then they discovered the signs of the struggle where

the coach had been halted, and down the stream led the trail.

Not far below was a stick, in the top of which was a slip of paper.

Taking it, Texas Jack read in his chief's well-known hand:

There were mounted outlaws awaiting the coach at Deep Dell Brook.

Their horses were staked out at the bend below here, and they had camped there all night.

The tracks show nine horses were there, and I suppose that means as many men.

With their prisoners, Surgeon Powell and the detectives, they can hardly travel very fast.

I shall press rapidly on until dark, marking trail as I go so that you can follow with considerable speed.

BILL.

A scout was sent back by Texas Jack to the ford with this note, to give to Captain Caruth, and then the scout pressed on once more at a quick trot.

All along they saw where Buffalo Bill had marked the trail, and when at last night came on they were compelled to halt, but they were glad to know that Buffalo Bill had had all of two hours more of daylight than they had.

A scout was sent back to bring the troopers up to the scouts' camp, and soon after they arrived.

"Well, Texas Jack, what do you think of the situation?" asked Captain Caruth, as he sat in his camp that night, having sent for the scout.

"Buffalo Bill had three hours of daylight at least, sir, when he reached the Brook, as his horse showed that he came through at full speed.

"Then, sir, he had his own fresh horse to mount there, and the trail of the robbers he doubtless followed at a run to get as far as possible before nightfall.

"The robbers could not have gone half so fast, and were certainly not expecting pursuit to-day, which would cause them to go slow, for they had killed Ned, I suppose they thought, and were not expecting Cody to be upon their trail."

"Then the chances are, you think, that Buffalo Bill is not very far behind the band?" asked Captain Caruth.

"I do, sir, and we can start just when it is light enough to see, so that we can keep as close upon Cody's heels as possible."

"Now, what is your opinion as to where these outlaws came from?"

"I pass there, captain, for I supposed that all of the band of the outlaw chief, Silk Lasso Sam, were either dead or wiped out.

"But, it seems, I am wrong, sir."

"Yes, for these were certainly men who were willing to come to the rescue of their chief."

"Yes, sir, and I only hope that no other harm than being taken prisoner has befallen Surgeon Powell."

"So do I."

"Yet, Jack, I have such an abiding faith in Surgeon Powell's capacity for taking care of himself that I do not believe that he was born to die with his boots on."

"I hope he can take his time about it, sir, when his time comes, for no better man did I ever meet, nor do I care to know," was the scout's comment.

"If he has an enemy, Jack, it is an outlaw, an Indian or a villain."

"You are right, sir."

"But we had better get all the sleep we can, for we will be kept humping it to-morrow, if Buffalo Bill can find horses to ride."

"Yes, he's a rough and ready rider, and it would take a score of horses to break him down."

"Now, good-night," and wrapping his blanket about him, the captain dropped off to sleep at once.

Texas Jack had said that all the men could rest, for he would keep watch, and he started off alone, leaving the whole camp in deep slumber.

He, too, had an iron frame, and lantern in hand he picked out the trail for a distance of some six or seven miles.

Then he returned to camp, on foot as he had gone, and, as it was yet an hour before dawn, aroused the men so that they could reach the place he had gone to before daylight, get breakfast and be ready for the trail when able to see it.

CHAPTER XV.

TREACHERY.

Now to go back to the adventures that had befallen Horseshoe Ned.

The coach that carried the prisoner away from the fort progressed on its way until it neared Deep Dell Brook.

Then Detective Raymond called out to the driver that the prisoner was not feeling very well, and he would like to give him a seat on top of the coach.

This was allowed and a seat was arranged behind Surgeon Powell and Horseshoe Ned.

Then on the coach went once more.

Neither Horseshoe Ned or Surgeon Powell suspected treachery from behind them.

They were prepared to resist any attempt at the rescue of the prisoner, should the coach be held up on the way.

But behind the surgeon and the driver was a plot going on.

The prisoner's irons were quietly unlocked by Detective Raymond, and he was a free man.

Then, at a given signal, the two suddenly brought a

revolver down upon the head of the man immediately in the front of each.

The coach was just moving out of Deep Dell Brook at the time.

The blows were stunning ones, and that one delivered by the detective upon the head of the driver a very severe one, for it cut to the bone, and was given with an indifference as to whether it killed or not.

The blow received by the Surgeon Scout was less severe, perhaps because the benumbed hands of the outlaw chief were not able to strike so hard, perhaps because the man admired Frank Powell as he had said that he did.

Horseshoe Ned fell heavily from his box to the ground, and the team stopped.

Surgeon Powell also reeled, clutched at his revolver, and turning, fired.

His shot killed the pretended Detective Raymond, though he received a bullet himself in the shoulder, and dropped from the coach to the ground.

Half stunned as he was by the blow, and wounded, too, while the fall gave him a severe shock, he was no match for the outlaw chief, and the two men who leaped from the coach upon him.

He was quickly secured, disarmed, and the manacles taken from Silk Lasso Sam were put upon him.

There were others who had appeared upon the scene during this unequal combat.

They were two men who quickly looked about for Raymond, but found him dead.

Then they turned to Silk Lasso Sam and said that they had been ordered to that point to meet him, and had horses near.

The chief, aided by one of the pretended detectives, assisted Surgeon Powell along the bank to where the horses awaited them, the other man following soon after, with the booty taken from the coach, which they reported leaving when it had been halted in the trail, and with Horseshoe Ned, as they said, dead near it, and the body of Raymond they had placed inside.

Surgeon Powell appeared half dazed from his blow, but he made no resistance and was mounted upon one of the horses that was there.

"You must go with me, Surgeon Powell, for I do not wish to kill you, and you are too dangerous a man to leave behind," said the chief.

Frank Powell made no reply and mounting, the chief, his prisoner and four men set off down the valley.

The wound of the surgeon was looked to at the first halt made, and it was found not to be dangerous, though severe.

On they went until after noon, when the chief said:

"I wish to divide here."

"You have your pay, men, for the work you have done,

so go your separate ways, and I will go mine, taking my prisoner with me.

"The odd horses we will turn loose, and that there may be seven separate trails going in as many directions, I will go on foot, and the surgeon can ride the horse I had."

Thus the men parted on the trail, the surgeon scout mounted on the best horse, which was led by Silk Lasso Sam.

The outlaw chief appeared to have a direct purpose in view, and to know the country thoroughly, for he kept steadily on, the Surgeon Scout seemingly indifferent to what was going on.

Toward sunset he came to a good spot for a camp, and was just coming to a halt, when a horse and rider appeared in sight.

The chief started and dropped his hand upon his revolver, as though to stand at bay, when the Surgeon Scout said, sternly:

"Hold! do not fire upon a woman."

"My God, I had nearly done so, for I could hardly see her through the foliage."

"It is your sister."

"Yes."

The outlaw gave a call, and the horsewoman, who had not seen them up to that time, came quickly toward them.

"Ruth!"

"Brother!"

The rider had thrown herself from her horse and was clasped in her brother's arms, while she cried:

"You are free, and now you will remember your pledge to me to lead a different life?"

"I will keep my word to you, Ruth."

"But see, here is an old friend, and he is wounded and suffering."

"Surgeon Powell!" cried Ruth, her face turning white, and then wheeling upon her brother, she demanded, sternly:

"What does this mean, sir?"

The eyes of Ruth flashed fire as she turned them upon her brother, whose face flushed under her gaze, while he said, in an embarrassed manner:

"Do not be angry, Ruth, for no harm has been done, or very little, at least, for the surgeon is not much hurt."

"I wish to say to you, Surgeon Powell," and Ruth turned toward him, "that I planned the escape of my brother from the gallows.

"I went to Chicago, got forged documents and sent these men in my pay to play the detective and bring my brother away.

"I was to have horses meet them at Deep Dell Brook, and it seems that so far as his escape is concerned, all went well.

"In consideration for his escape, he had pledged me to lead a different life, to reform.

"Now, when I supposed that there would be no trouble in his making his escape, no bloodshed, he appears here when I come to meet him, with you in irons and a prisoner.

"I ask you, Surgeon Powell, what does it mean?"

"Let your brother inform you, Miss Arden," was the reply of Frank Powell.

"Well, sir, what explanation have you to offer for this outrage upon Surgeon Powell?"

"I wish to say, Ruth, that you are angry without a cause.

"Colonel Dunwoody sent Surgeon Powell along also, and there was but one way to escape, if I was to do so.

"The man Raymond dealt Horseshoe Ned a severe blow, and I struck the surgeon, but not to do him other harm than stun him.

"The driver, I fear, was killed, for he fell from the box, while Surgeon Powell turned, drew his revolver and fired upon Raymond, who also drew trigger at the same time.

"The surgeon killed Raymond, and you see that Dr. Powell received a slight wound in the shoulder.

"There was nothing to be done then but to make Surgeon Powell a prisoner and bring him along.

"I discovered the men back in the valley, and we were upon our way to Pocket City, where I knew that you would do all in your power for the doctor."

"Gladly I will, and it is but seven miles to Pocket City, and we will go on at once.

"But there should have been no bloodshed in this escape, brother, for I meant that it should be a rescue wholly by strategy.

"Come, Surgeon Powell, you are no prisoner, so, brother, unlock those irons."

"And have him kill me?"

"I shall take the parole of both of you to do no harm to each other.

"Will you give it, Surgeon Powell?"

"As you ask it, Miss Arden, I will."

"And you, brother?"

"I will only protect my life," was the guarded answer of the outlaw.

"Then give me the key of these manacles."

They were handed to her, and the irons were unlocked and thrown over the horn of the saddle.

"Now, Dr. Powell, I desire to get you to a place of safety as soon as possible, and see what can be done for you.

"Brother, my horse is fresh and able to carry double, so mount behind me."

This the outlaw did, and she rode on through the gathering darkness.

Arriving in the vicinity of Hangman's Gulch, Ruth paused, and said:

"Brother, you know that it will not do for you to be seen, and I have a hiding place for you, where you can be safe until you have an opportunity of leaving this country.

"You have no fear of Hangman's Gulch, so remain here until I return for you later, for now I shall go on with Major Powell to the hotel."

The outlay made no reply and obeyed, and Ruth rode on with Surgeon Powell by her side.

Soon after he found himself in pleasant quarters, and his wounds were skillfully dressed by the fair hands of the good Samaritan who once more appeared in her character of Bonnie Belle.

When Ruth had seen Surgeon Powell in comfortable quarters at The Frying Pan, she mounted her horse and rode alone out of Pocket City.

There were few miners abroad at that hour, and if any one saw her at all, they supposed in the darkness that she was a man.

Even had they known it to be Bonnie Belle, she would have gone unquestioned as to the cause of her late ride, no matter how much any one would have wondered as to the reason.

She rode directly toward Hangman's Gulch, and that was a sure sign that she would meet no one on that trail, which the bravest of the miners would not travel by night.

And yet there in that weird spot, among the graves of a score of victims of border justice or injustice, as the case might be, with the gallows rising above him, stood a man then under sentence of death to die by hanging.

A man who could count his victims by the score, a man revengeful, merciless and wicked far beyond his kind.

It was Austin Arden, known on the frontier as Silk Lasso Sam.

He had been left there by his devoted sister to await her return, and if the spot had haunting memories for him, he did not reveal the fact by word or deed.

In fact, he was rather more callous, it seemed, than touched by the memories which the place must bring up to one who was such as he.

He uttered an impatient oath now and then, as time passed on and he did not hear his sister returning, and at last, losing his patience as time stole on, he was moving down toward the mouth of the gulch, when his ears caught the clatter of hoof falls.

"She is coming," he muttered.

Then, as he darted back into the shadow, he drew a revolver and said:

"But I must not be too sure."

Soon a horse and rider appeared in the gulch, and drawing rein, those near heard the soft, plaintive notes of the whip-poor-will.

Then, as the call was repeated again and again, he stepped out from the shadow and approached the maiden where she sat upon her horse.

"Ah, brother, I am so glad to find you, for I was becoming anxious at not finding you," she said, as she slipped from her saddle to the ground.

"I was so taken aback at the old whip-poor-will call, Ruth, that I could neither answer it, or speak."

"Then you can feel, and you are not, as people have said, utterly heartless and callous!"

"I hope I am a changed man, my sister. But what am I to do?"

"You are to return with me to Pocket City, for I have a place in my wing of the hotel where I can hide and care for you for a few days, as it would by no means be safe for you to attempt now to go through the country alone."

"And why not now?"

"Because you know that your attack on Surgeon Powell will cause the wildest excitement at the fort.

"Of course it will be known that you escaped, and Colonel Dunwoody will have half his force on your track, for Surgeon Powell will be supposed to have been killed, and that will make those who search for you most revengeful."

"That is so, sister."

"I am sorry that this was not an escape without violence, and, as I fear, the death of the driver."

"How could it be without violence or death with the Surgeon Scout along, Ruth, for you know it would have been easier to have mastered a guard of half a dozen men than Powell, unless by a blow when he did not expect it.

"He is an extraordinary man, you know."

"Yes, he is, and I am glad it is no worse.

"But now here are some things for you to put on, and you are to come with me to Pocket City.

"I will ride on ahead and enter my wing of the hotel, and when you hear the whip-poor-will cry, do you then come directly to my gate in the stockade wall."

"I understand."

"I will have your room ready, and will bring you your food myself, while I am arranging for your departure."

"You are most kind to me, Ruth.

"But then you always have been."

"I wish to be, and I hope to help you to lead a different life, my brother."

"You alone can do it, Ruth," was the low response, and then, as though he dreaded trouble yet for himself, he said:

"What you say about Powell alarms me, and if it is found out that you are my sister, then your house will be searched, Ruth."

"Let them search it, for they will never find you in the place where I can hide you, Austin."

"All right, I am in your hands, my sister," and having slipped on the clothes she had brought him, he followed her on to the edge of Pocket City.

For half an hour he waited there in the shadow of the timber, and then came the cry of the night bird, when he walked briskly toward the stockade.

The gate was opened, and unseen by any one, he entered and had reached a haven of refuge.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SURGEON SCOUT GIVES A WARNING.

Frank Powell's wounds were painful, though not serious.

He had been taken to one of the pleasantest rooms in the border shanty known as The Frying Pan, and thither went Bonnie Belle and a Chinese servant, with water, arnica and bandages.

"I have come to dress your wounds, Surgeon Powell, under your direction," she said, with a smile.

"They amount to but little to one who has roughed it as I have, Miss Arden."

"There, you are calling me Miss Arden, when you know that here I am Bonnie Belle."

"I will not mistake again, Bonnie Belle."

"Here, Chin-Chin, get ready to help me," and having placed the basin and other things upon the table, she drew back the collar of the surgeon's shirt and glanced at the wound.

"What do you think of it?" she asked.

"The bullet passed through and touched no bones, so it will soon heal," he assured.

She then bathed the two wounds where the bullet cut its way in and out, and bandaged the shoulder firmly.

"Now to that cut upon the head."

The blow had cut to the bone, but the skull was not injured, and being washed clean, she took a couple of stitches, drawing it together, after which it was also dressed carefully.

Chin-Chin, meanwhile, was sent for some supper for the Surgeon Scout, who ate heartily of what was brought to him, and, left to himself, was soon after sound asleep.

The next day Bonnie Belle visited him, with Chin-Chin, again dressed his wounds and then said:

"Now, Surgeon Powell, I have written a letter to the fort that you are here, and I suppose a troop will soon be sent for you."

"Yes, but there was no need of it, as I could have gone on alone."

"No, sir, that I would not allow, for brave and strong

as you are, you are not able to take that ride alone, so you are to remain here until your comrades come for you."

"You are the captain, Bonnie Belle, and so I obey."

"But I have something to say to you."

"Well, sir?"

"You do not know that Buffalo Bill is on my trail."

She started and asked:

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Buffalo Bill was to follow the coach to the end of the run."

"He did not say as much, but I feel sure that he did so."

"Yes."

"Of course he came upon the scene where the coach had been held up, and where were the bodies of the rescuer and of Horseshoe Ned, if the latter was killed, which I doubt."

"I think I see your meaning now."

"Yes, for Buffalo Bill coming upon this scene, read it like an open book. He returned to the fort and got a force with which to follow the rescuers, and he did so with all the promptness for which he is famous. That is the way I read it, anyhow."

"And that means that he will come here?"

"Yes, and very soon."

"But my brother guarded against that by dividing the men, as you know, and covering up the trails as well as he could."

"Your brother did not guard against the fact that Buffalo Bill was upon his trail. He supposed that it would, perhaps, be a couple of days before the rescue was known, and so the trails would be in a manner stale before there would be any one on his track. What became of his rescuers he doubtless did not care, so long as he reached you in safety and found a hiding place."

"I fear such is the nature of my brother, Dr. Powell."

"I merely judge him by his actions in the past, and though I feel that he deserves hanging, and should be hanged without any hesitation if taken, as he will surely be, for your sake I give you this warning."

"It is most kind of you."

"No, it is just to you, for I feel that you are here, living the life you do, only to save your brother, to redeem him."

"You have played a bold game for his rescue, and as you believe in his reformation, as he has pledged himself to lead a different life, I shall not be the one to thwart you, so give you a warning that if Buffalo Bill comes here with his scouts, as he surely will, he will ferret out the hiding place of your brother and you will see him hanged before your eyes, I very much fear."

"Then you would advise me to at once remove him to a safer retreat?" anxiously asked Bonnie Belle.

"I would advise you to send him far from here at once, Bonnie Belle.

"If he goes back to his old ways of wickedness again, then you have done far more than your duty by him and he must take the consequences."

"Yes, it must be so," she said, sadly, and then, as she turned from the room, she continued:

"I thank you, Surgeon Powell; and I will at once take your advice."

From the room of the Surgeon Scout, Bonnie Belle went with very thoughtful face to her room.

She soon made her arrangements for bringing the outlaw to her own quarters, for she could do nothing else.

That she did so the reader has seen.

Then she looked the situation squarely in the face and decided to speak and act at once.

Delays are dangerous she was well aware, and with Buffalo Bill upon the trail of her brother, she understood just what it meant.

So she said, after some time spent in silent thought:

"Brother, I wish to talk with you."

"I am very tired, sis, so say another time."

"No, it must be now, for I have something to tell you that will startle you."

"Well?"

"Buffalo Bill is upon your trail."

"Ha! How know you this?"

"From the Surgeon Scout."

"Bah! he has tried to frighten you."

"And has been successful."

"You are frightened, then?"

"I am."

"And I am not."

"Well we shall see what cause you have."

"Fire away."

"The Surgeon Scout did not try to frighten me."

"What then?"

"He did me a kindness, as, after all I had risked and done for you, he did not wish me to see you hanged."

"He is very kind."

There was a sneer in the man's tones.

"You misunderstand him, as I will prove to you."

"He told me that he had been sent East by Colonel Dunwoody under orders, and that fearful of an attack upon the coach to rescue you, for my men were not suspected of being treacherous, except that they might be bribed to release you, detectives though they were supposed to be, Buffalo Bill had decided to follow the coach, and did so."

"Ah!"

"He therefore came upon the scene and of course rode back to the fort for aid."

"This looks bad, if true."

"It is true, for Surgeon Powell told me for my good, with the hope that you might have a chance to prove to me that your reformation was sincere."

The outlaw wore a troubled look now, for he knew what Buffalo Bill was on a trail.

"Well, Ruth, what is to be done?"

"If you remain here, knowing as he does that you are my brother, Buffalo Bill will prevent your escape, for he will put spies upon this hotel and you will be captured when you least expect it."

"It looks bad for me, sis."

"Yes, unless you go at once from here."

"How can I?"

"I will go to the stable and get my best horse for you, yes, two of them, for one you can use as a pack animal."

"I will fit you up a disguise, some provisions to last you a week or more, your weapons you can get together, and when all is in readiness you can meet me at the cliff on the trail to Hangman's Gulch."

"That trail is well traveled, and you can take the bed of the stream then, following down it for miles."

"This will destroy any trail, for I will drag back a bush over the trail of the horses to the stream, leaving a rope to it as though a horse had been hitched to it and then broke away."

"You are as ingenious as Buffalo Bill, sis."

"When we are working for a life our brains are on the alert, brother."

"Now, I will get the provisions, blankets, ammunition and weapons packed up, and I will bring them to you with the pack saddle at once, and I will see to the horses going to the edge of the timber."

"You will have to carry the pack saddle that far yourself, but the other horse will be all saddled and bridled ready for you."

"I will not mind it, Ruth; but I want the best animals you have."

"You shall have them."

"And you know that I have no money."

"Indeed?"

"It is so."

"I heard that you had been allowed to keep what you had on you of value when taken."

"It is not so, for I was robbed of everything," said the outlaw.

"Well, brother, I am not sorry, for that which you had had been gained dishonorably and would have brought you bad luck."

"I will give you ten thousand dollars in bills, which you can carry easily, and when I know in the future, that you have reformed, that you have atoned for the

past all that lies within your power, then will I share with you the fortune that I possess."

"You are very kind to me, Ruth; but I believe if I had more money now I could invest it so well that you would not have to give me a cent."

"I cannot give you more, now, brother; but should you need it, you know where I told you to write to me, and I will readily help you."

"But have you decided where you will go?"

"Yes, I shall go to South America somewhere and invest my money there."

"Well, may success attend you, brother, wherever you go."

And half an hour after the devoted sister parted from her outlaw brother at the little stream, she returning to the camps dragging after her a cedar bush to wipe out the trails of the two horses she had led to that spot to await his coming.

And once more a free man. Austin Arden was launched again upon the world, no longer known as Silk Lasso Sam the outlaw.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONCLUSION.

The scouts under Buffalo Bill came into camp the following day after starting upon the trails, two of them with horses which they had found astray in the timber, and two more with a prisoner they had taken.

Two others reported having killed a man whom they overtook and who showed fight, and thus were the pretended detectives, the comrades of Raymond, accounted for.

Texas Jack had the best story to tell, however.

He had tracked a horse down toward Pocket City and discovered that there was a man on foot going along that way, too.

He had trailed them to a spot half a dozen miles from Yellow Dust Valley, and there a horse had joined them, as the tracks showed.

This horse came from the direction of Yellow Dust Valley.

"That is the trail we take, Captain Caruth, and I am going to ask you to camp your men outside of Pocket City, and you and the major go on with me alone," said Buffalo Bill.

"You will discover my reason later, and, if I mistake not we will find Surgeon Powell in Pocket City, for I cannot believe that harm has befallen him."

So the command moved on its way, and Buffalo Bill guided them to the camping place near the cabin of Deadshot Dean.

It was night then, and accompanied by Captain

Caruth, Buffalo Bill rode on into Pocket City and halted at The Frying Pan.

But for the warning given by the Surgeon Scout, it would have been to the great surprise of Bonnie Belle, as she came out of her rooms, to be suddenly confronted by the tall form of the scout, and to see behind him the two officers in uniform.

The scout acted as spokesman and said:

"Bonnie Belle, we are here to find Surgeon Powell, and I feel that you will give what information you can regarding him."

"Come into my rooms and I will tell you all there is to tell, while, to relieve your minds, let me say that Surgeon Powell is here and doing well, though he is wounded."

"I will explain, however."

And then she told the story of her bold rescue of her brother, and which had been intended to be a bloodless one, as far as she was concerned.

Surgeon Powell was sent for and was able to come to her rooms to meet his comrades, and a pleasant meeting it was.

"And now, Bonnie Belle, I desire to ask you one question," said Buffalo Bill.

"Certainly."

"Where is your brother?"

"Far from here, for he was set free upon conditions."

"I have kept my contract with him, and with a handsome sum of money, he has gone to appear amid these scenes no more."

"As for myself, I shall start East upon the next coach going out, to escape punishment from Colonel Dunwoody."

Until a late hour they all talked together, and the next morning, as Surgeon Powell expressed himself as well able for the journey, the return march was begun.

The two heroes of the plains, who have been mainly the heroes of this romance, the Surgeon Scout, Frank Powell, and the king of scouts, Buffalo Bill, are to-day men whose names are read almost daily in story and verse, and that they may yet be spared to lives of usefulness, to enjoy for many years the honors they have won in their heroic deeds upon the frontier, is, I know, the warmest wish of all.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 63, will contain "Buffalo Bill and the Red Riders; or, The Mad Driver of the Overlands."

How the mad driver lost his reason is a thrilling story. Buffalo Bill tracked the Red Riders, who were responsible for this, became one of their band for a few hours and finally cleaned out the whole stronghold where they dwelt. Look out for this story in next week's issue.



THRILLING ADVENTURE



Contest pretty near half-way over, boys, and humming along.
Keep it going. We'll soon swing round into the home-stretch, and finish with a burst of speed.
Remember those fishing sets we offer as prizes. If you don't, look on page 31.

A Close Shave With a Twister.

(By George Herman Braun, Neb.)

About five years ago we lived in a town called Beloit, in Mitchell County, Kansas. We lived in a one-story house of seven rooms and had a big orchard, a horse, cow, calf and several chickens. It was my business to drive the cow to and from a pasture about a mile away from us.

One afternoon in August the sky suddenly became clouded. I paid no particular attention to it until about four o'clock, when father called our attention to a big, black cloud hanging below the others in the south.

On a closer scrutiny we could see that it was twisting and circling, and gradually forming into a tunnel-shaped mass. Father said it was a cyclone cloud and told me to go after the cow, while he got things ready in the cyclone cellar. Well, I went. When I reached the gate I saw nothing of the cows and so pressed on. I went all over the pasture, but couldn't find a cow.

I looked at the cloud (or twister) and saw that it had gradually lowered itself. I noticed that the color of the lightning was a deep red instead of yellow. Then I got frightened and determined to go home without the cow, but when I reached the gate you can imagine my surprise at seeing every cow assembled there.

I let our cow out of the gate and hurried on home, meanwhile keeping an eye on the twister, which had moved to the southwest.

About half way home it suddenly began to rain and blow terribly. I could hardly advance a step. I could hear the crashing and breaking away of boards by the wind. Presently a plank five feet long, a foot wide and an inch thick came flying through the air, grazing the cow, striking me on the shoulder, and hurling me to the ground in the mud. I got up in considerable pain, my arm severely bruised, and hurried on.

About half a block further I was suddenly blinded by a flash of lightning and knocked down by something falling on me, pinning me to the ground. Next moment the air was resounding with a crash of thunder enough to deafen a fish.

Well, the lightning had struck a large tree near me, breaking the limb that now pinned me to the ground. I had to use all my strength to get my leg out and finally scrambled from under the tree in some way. I couldn't find the cow, but I knew she went on home, and I managed to limp there also.

I was glad when I got home, for I was drenched to the skin and bruised all over, but it didn't take long for me to get well again.

Next day we heard that the cyclone had struck a town thirty miles away.

A Terrible Experience.

(By Harry Kleifgen, Indiana.)

One night, about a year ago—I shall never forget that night—Dan Williams, a friend of mine, and I went to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. We had decided to stay at Dan's home that night, as it was not so far from the show grounds. We had an excellent time that night, and started for home about midnight. We had about a mile to walk along the Pelt Railroad, and a long trestle bridge about one hundred yards long and having three spans. While walking along we were joking and making a lot of racket until we reached about the center of the bridge.

Then, and only then, did we hear the train, which was fast approaching us.

Upon seeing it, Dan yelled for me to run, which we did, but when I was within fifteen feet of the pier I heard a scream, and one glance in back was enough. I jumped and missed the pier, but not until I had struck my head upon an iron railing. I went far out into the darkness and it seemed an age before I struck water. At last I hit the water with a great splash and sank, and when I came to the top I struck out for shore. It seemed as if I never would reach land again. At last I felt a strange ringing in my ears, and then it seemed as though I was paralyzed, and with a cry I became unconscious. When I came to I was at home in bed with a high fever, and it was many a day before I was able to get out again.

Later I learned that the engineer had seen us too late, and he stopped the train and notified a farmer who had a boat, and who rowed out in the river and found me when I was near drowned.

The next day they found the remains of Dan, who was struck by the train and killed, and his body falling in the river. They were unable to find it till daylight.

I was unconscious for three days, and during that time they buried poor Dan Williams, my best friend.

The Mountain Lion.

(By Harold Ogilvie, New Mexico.)

When I was a boy about fourteen years old I obtained permission to go rabbit hunting up in the mountains. One evening about dusk I took my brother's shotgun and only three shells. That was all he had.

I walked about two miles and killed two rabbits and a hawk. Just as I was returning to go home I heard a low noise and turned around just in time to have a mountain lion strike me in the face. He had sprang off a rock and if I had kept on without turning around he would have struck me on my back. He knocked me over and my head struck against a rock and bled a whole lot.

He got a taste of blood and seemed to want more. He bit into my shoulder and arm. I had a small knife, and I stabbed him in the shoulder, but that only enraged him the more, and just then a rifle cracked and he fell over dead.

It was my boy pard and had he not come up just then I would not be writing this adventure.

A Close Shave.

(By Jas. Stewart, Iowa.)

One day when I was about twelve years old I and some other boys were playing ball in a pasture near the house and another boy was shooting sparrows with a .22 rifle.

I guess he did not see us.

He shot at a sparrow and the bullet glanced, and it just missed me about an inch. Wasn't that a close shave?

I was never so scared in my life.

Oklahoma's Prairie Fire.

(By Frank Woodbeck, Oklahoma Territory.)

It was a fine morning in the year of 1887 when the prairie of Oklahoma was covered with vast herds of cattle. It was on that morning we started for a large cattle ranch. This ranch was known as Carzine Ranch.

We were going there to spend the day and have a time hunting and fishing.

This ranch is about twenty miles from the Kansas line. It was afternoon when we got there and after we had eaten our dinner and were looking around to see what we could see, we noticed that the birds were all coming from the West and before long rabbits, cattle and everything else began to go past as fast as they could go. We did not know what to think of it until we could see smoke in the distance, and we knew what was coming and we did not know what to do. We did not have time to go to the State line and the only place to get was

to get under an old log bridge which had been built by the cowboys. It was not long before we could see the buffalo chips flying in the air, and wherever they would fall they would set fire.

Everything of the ranch was burned except the bridge we were under, and it was not long before it began to burn and we had to get out. The fire was past and nothing left but smoke, and we were nearly smothered to death, when the wind began to blow hard and it soon began to rain, and if it had not been for the rain we would have been smothered to death. That is the nearest to being dead I ever was or want to be.

How I Lost My Gun.

(By Robert White, New Jersey.)

One day in December I made up my mind to go gunning, and I was returning home by the way of a railroad that ran into the city that I lived in. I was about half way home when I came upon a long, single-track railroad bridge across a wide creek.

I was about half way over when I saw, to my dismay, a train coming from the rear, and I did not know what to do, so I got down between the rails. I happened to leave my gun on top of the bridge, and it was knocked to splinters and the train passed over my head like a thunderbolt.

The steam was coming out of one of the brakes and scalded my hands, and I nearly dropped, but I managed to hang until it passed over and then I had a great time getting on the bridge again, but at last I got there and continued on my journey home very much dismayed about the loss of my gun.

At last I got home, and I had to relate the story to my parents.

Lost in a Cave.

(By Eber E. Ludwick, Pa.)

Last institute week four other boys and I planned a visit to Stoverdale Cave. We had lanterns and guide strings, also a rope to let us down the "well," as we called it, a hole from the upper cavern to the lower cavern about fifteen feet deep.

After we had gone through the upper cavern we fastened the rope securely and slid down into the lower cavern. We then fastened our guide string and started out. After seeing all the sights and carving our names on the rocks, we began to feel hungry, so we decided to go back and have our dinner. We reached the "well" in safety, and after a good deal of trouble all got up but me, I being left to put the lanterns on a rope to have them drawn up.

Just then I remembered that I had left my lantern away back on a rock where I had carved my name. I didn't miss it because it was only a lard oil lantern and did not give much light, as my job was to let out the guide string I didn't want such a big lantern.

So, thinking I could get it myself, I took one of the other boy's lanterns and started out. Although the guide string was there, I thought it was of no use to follow it, as I thought I knew where to find the lantern, because it was such a bother. So I went on, and suddenly I encountered the blank side of the cave.

Not knowing what this meant, I looked around and saw a cavern leading from this. So I started in this one, thinking it was one we had passed through, because — Yes, there was the same rock, but yet I was doubtful. Anyway, I started in this one.

I had not gone far when I noticed my lantern grow dim and finally go out. Thinking it blew out, I tried to light it with the only match I had, but I had no sooner lit it than it went out again. Then the startling fact came to me that the air here was too rare to sustain a light.

Then all at once I smelt smoke, which became stronger and stronger. Then bats flew all around me and in my face, and I thought I saw big eyes and heard strange noises. These thoughts were made more real by my seeing campfires of tramps in the cave. All these things happened in a short time, but I was so thoroughly scared, and the smoke became so strong I could hardly breathe, and had to shut my eyes and I ran like one mad.

I had not run far when I stumbled and fell over a cliff of rocks. I threw out my hands, naturally, and clutched something all at once and stopped. I found it was the guide string, but I was so weak from smoke I could hardly move, and I could not open my eyes. Not knowing where I was going, I stumbled along by the help of the guide string, until I came to the "well," knowing it by a little fresh air coming down. I then called for help, for the boys had gone I knew not where, and I was too weak to get up myself.

I called again and then fainted. When I came to I was lying in the grass with the boys bathing my forehead with water. The boys had gone to the entrance of the cave, which was not far away from the "well," and made fires to cook dinner and dry our clothes, which were wet from the drippings of water. As they had to start them with brush and leaves they smoked a great deal, but they "didn't think," they said. After a while they heard me call, and came to the "well."

Finding me unconscious, they became frightened and some went down and some stayed up, and then they got me up the best way they could. We started at once, and my being half carried I managed to get home and to bed, where I stayed for two days and a half. Whenever I think of it it makes me shudder, and I don't think I will ever get my lantern.

A Caddie's Story.

(By Thos. Cassin, Illinois.)

I am about to tell you of an adventure I had. I am a caddie for the Glen View Golf Club. One day I was watching another man drive his ball. Then my man got ready. He struck the ball. I was to see the ball coming swiftly toward me. I stood there looking at it.

Then I heard some one shout. I stooped just as it was a foot from me. While it was passing it took my cap along. That was one of the closest shaves I had and hope it will be the last.

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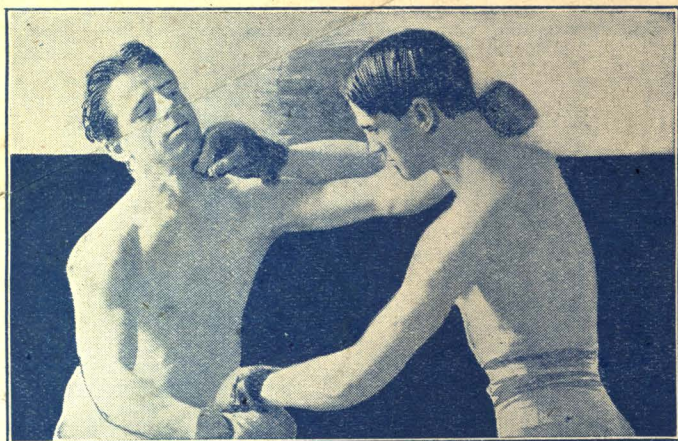
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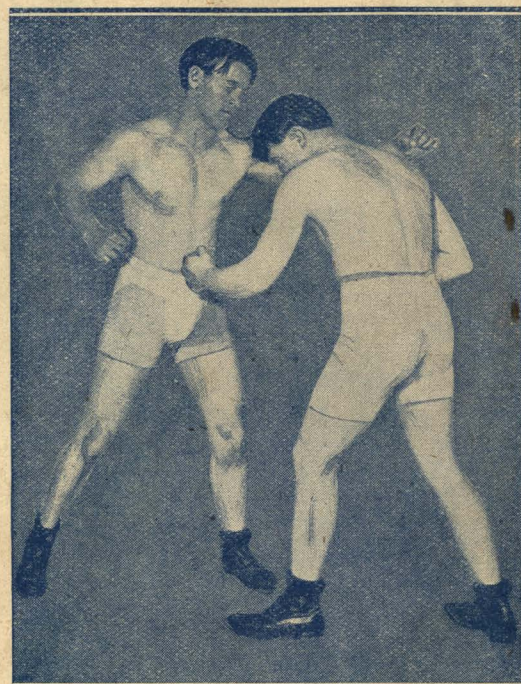
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